Introduction,
Objectives, Hypotheses and Methodology
1.1. INTRODUCTION

The Education Commission in 1966 recommended that where there is an outstanding college with proven capacity to improve itself markedly, consideration should be given to granting it an autonomous status. This would involve the statutory power to frame its own rules of admission, to choose its own courses of study and to conduct examinations. The parent university’s role would be one of general supervision and the actual conferment of the degree. In October 1973, the UGC issued guidelines to all the Universities recommending that they should set up autonomous colleges which will have ‘freedom in the framing of rules of admission, structuring various courses of studies and the formulation of methods of evaluations’ [31].

The National policy on education of 1986 had stressed the importance of education by stating that “Education is a unique investment in the present and the future, and Higher education is a crucial factor for survival.”[60] The present system of universities acting as examining bodies with a number of affiliated colleges is ill suited to meet the changes in curriculum and teaching techniques. The system is too large to be able to change its methods at a pace called for in modern times. It is necessary that colleges be given freedom to
implement changes in curriculum, teaching methods, infrastructures and
evaluation system. This is the one main objective behind the creation of
autonomous colleges. The feedback received about the effects of autonomy in
colleges revealed the following:

(a) They facilitated the colleges to manage their own affairs without
dependng on external agencies and this was found conducive to the timely
framing and modification of courses and conduct of examinations.
(b) They provided scope for enriching and updating the syllabus with
the inclusion of modern/application-oriented/socially relevant courses.
(c) They provided scope for orienting students to opt for skill-oriented
jobs.
(d) They promoted self-study on account of inclusion of self study
course areas in the curriculum.
(e) They provided facilities for students to choose extra credit courses.
(f) They gave job satisfaction to the teachers because of their
involvement in syllabus framing.
(g) The UGC grant of a flat Rs.2.00 lakhs a year for all the autonomous
colleges given in the early years was found inadequate.
1.2. THE COLLEGIATE LANDSCAPE

In 1947 there were 19 Universities and 636 Colleges and to day there are about 250 Universities, and 9000 Colleges in the country. Inspite of this phenomenal growth in the nation’s edifice of higher education “it is a widely shared view that Indian higher education, rooted in the colonial past, is totally out moded and chaotic, wasteful and uncreative.”[6] Autonomous colleges, a new concept in the field of higher education in India, came in to existence in 1978. The following are the broad areas for in depth evaluation of autonomy in colleges.

(i) Specific statement of goals (and their relation to the progress of the institution, the community and the nation).

(ii) Source and uses of funds.

(iii) Faculty qualifications, composition and support to career prospects.

(iv) Students – composition, amenities etc.,

(v) Library and its involvement in research, number of books and journals.

   Development of library. Library proposals, Users study, etc.,

(vi) Research and extension services.

1.3. IDENTIFICATION OF AUTONOMOUS COLLEGES

Autonomy for college implies that the college and its teachers assume full responsibility and accountability for the academic programmes they provide, for the content and quality of their teaching, and for the admission and
assessment of their students; provision of physical facilities, such as a good
library with adequate number of books and journals [27].

For the improvement of libraries in autonomous college, the UGC offers
a package of financial support in order to improve the library and its services
by providing functional building, more books, journals and other
infrastructures like computers.

The most impressive fact about college libraries is their phenomenal
growth in recent years. There has been a nine-fold increase in the number of
colleges in the last five decades of late a library has come to be regarded as an
integral part of the teaching process in the institution. It is heartening to note
that the University Grants Commission of India (UGC), which was set up to
promote and coordinate higher education in the country has earnestly taken up
the task of developing and reforming the libraries in colleges and universities.
More funds for their all round development are being earmarked both by the
Government and the UGC [26].

1.4. IMPORTANCE OF COLLEGE LIBRARIES

A well equipped and well managed library is the foundation of modern
educational structure. The importance of libraries in Higher Education is
emphasized by the various commissions set up by the Government of India.
The Kothari Education Commission (1964-66) pointed out, "Nothing could be more damaging to a growing department than to neglect its library or give it a low priority. On the contrary, the library should be an important centre of attraction in a college or a university campus."[33]

A University or a college, and for that purpose, any institution of higher learning is rightly described as a community where teachers and scholars are the head, students are the body and the library its heart. [57] If the body is to perform its functions properly and efficiently its heart must be well-developed and strong in its functioning. Thomas Caryle was not exaggerating when he described a 'true university is a library of books.' Sir Charles Grant Robertson, a former distinguished Vice-Chancellor of one of the leading Universities in England was expressing the same idea in another way when he said "If he were a dictator, he would reduce the time devoted to lecture to a third and insist on the students spending more hours in the library.

1.5. ESTABLISHMENT OF THE UGC - A TURNING POINT

The establishment of the University Grants Commission (UGC) by a statute in 1956 is an important landmark in the growth and development of higher education in India. Since its very inception the UGC recognised the importance of college and University libraries and gave top priority for their development in the Five Year Plans. Besides providing financial assistance for
books, library buildings, staff and other provisions, it provided leadership and a forum for planning, discussion and action. [71]

The first chairman of the UGC, Dr.C.D.Deshmukh was himself a scholar and lover of books. To give proper direction to the development of college and university libraries, he appointed a library committee in 1957 with Dr.S.R.Ranganathan as its chairman. To advise the commission on matters of proper functioning and management of libraries.

The report of the Library Committee and the proceedings of the Seminar published by the UGC in 1965 constitute to be a landmark in the development of University and college libraries in India after independence.

In the words of Dr.Deshmukh the first report of the UGC Library Committee is "A Classic in that particular field. The contents of that report as also a supplementary to the proceedings of a seminar will guide the development of the University and college libraries for atleast a generation to come."

1.6. OBJECTIVES OF COLLEGE LIBRARY

The objectives of a library in an autonomous college should become an instrument of instruction in order to determine the extent to which the readers, students and faculty use the resources of the library as an integral part of the
curriculum. In other words, it means that teaching in the class room must
depend more on library than on text books. That is, a library must become an
integral part of teaching programme, in letter and action.

In USA the concept of ‘Library – College’ has been used successfully
[49] The College is considered a library and the library is regarded as a
college. The education becomes student-centred and encourages students to
play a dynamic and creative roles in their own pursuit of education.

The effectiveness of student-learning process is increased by various
means one of which is the introduction of library centres, where students are
expected to do independent study with guidance from teachers and
librarians. [48]

An educational institution is established to provide formal education to
its students. Therefore, a college library as a component, should be designed to
serve students to help achieve their academic pursuits. Thus, the fundamental
objective of a college library is to provide full scope for self education.

1.7. NEED FOR THE PRESENT STUDY

Emphasis has been made on the need for granting autonomous status to
the colleges in order to achieve the objectives and goals of the education
system in India. So far a few studies have been conducted. Worth mentioning
here is “Innovations introduced by the Autonomous Colleges in the Southern region.” It covers over all activities, their infrastructural improvement, workshops-seminars organised, academic achievements, examination reform and extra curricular activities undertaken against their newly acquired autonomous status. They describe the unique innovations adopted by the colleges in various developmental activities such as the introduction of new courses, installation of computers, library development involving construction of new buildings, automation etc., But the literature survey revealed the fact that the impact of autonomy on libraries in autonomous colleges has not been systematically studied. So, the situation implies a separate study on the effect of autonomy which is essential to evaluate the trends, services, planning and management of autonomous college libraries in India. In order to achieve the desired goals and objectives of the autonomous college libraries, this study is more important than the earlier ones. Hence the present study is proposed to assess the effects of autonomy on the libraries functioning in the colleges of Tamil Nadu.

1.8. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study has been conducted with the following objectives:

1) To trace the development of college libraries in India in general, and autonomous college libraries in Tamil Nadu in particular.

2) To analyse the academic and organisational climate of the autonomous college libraries in Tamil Nadu with reference to such components as document collection, manpower, services, finance and management.
3) To find out the librarians' opinion towards the advantages or otherwise of the autonomy granted to their colleges.

4) To investigate whether the libraries in autonomous colleges have an edge over non-autonomous colleges. To offer suggestions for further developments aimed at improving information services in autonomous college libraries in the present context of IT.

5) To examine and differentiate the services and facilities provided by the libraries in the autonomous and non-autonomous colleges.

6) To examine the development of college libraries before and after autonomy.

7) To identify the problems related to library automation faced by the librarians in the autonomous college libraries.

8) To investigate whether and to what extent the autonomous college libraries in Tamil Nadu are involved in library automation after the autonomy was granted.

9) To formulate a model framework for the effective functioning of autonomous college libraries.

10) To discuss the limitations present in the effective functioning of autonomous college libraries under survey.

11) To study the growth and development of I.T. application in autonomous college libraries.
1.9. HYPOTHESES

Any research on social science is undertaken to test one or more hypotheses. It is through the testing in a descriptive form, the researcher relates the facts found in the social setting to his theoretical predictions. Based on this research tradition a set of eight hypotheses, listed below, is formulated and tested.

1. There is considerable development in the libraries of the autonomous colleges in Tamil Nadu. The autonomy offers the libraries opportunities to participate in the innovative teaching programmes initiated by the colleges.

2. The extent of development seen in the libraries corresponds to the progressive achievements reached by the autonomous colleges.

3. There exists no uniform pattern of development in the libraries functioning in autonomous colleges.

4. In terms of governance, personnel, finance and infrastructure the libraries in autonomous colleges show an edge over their counterparts in non-autonomous colleges.

5. In terms of book collection and services, the libraries in the autonomous colleges run by private management show more development than their counterparts in the autonomous colleges run by the Tamil Nadu Government.
6. Falling in line with the modern trend, libraries in the autonomous colleges begin to avail the advantages ensured by the Information Technology.

7. The role played by the librarians (in autonomous colleges) in the areas of planning, budgeting, organising and administering their libraries is significant.

8. Based on a set of weightage points, the autonomous college libraries can be ranked, which in turn will show the degree of excellence reached by the respective colleges.

1.10. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

1. This study is confined to arts and science colleges in Tamil Nadu, both private and government, that are given autonomous status. The libraries in professional colleges have not been taken into account.

2. It is based on the responses made by the librarians of autonomous colleges. It has not taken into consideration the opinion of other staff in the respective colleges.

3. The impact of autonomy on libraries in autonomous colleges is studied through a survey and interview method. Hence certain limitations inherent in this approach may be present.
1.11. SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

1. The study will facilitate the policy makers, the Government (UGC), Library professionals and the management of the colleges to have a complete study on the importance of autonomy to the colleges against the new educational systems emerging at the national and international level.

2. It will also offer new avenues to undertake similar studies in other states.

1.12. DATA BASE AND METHODOLOGY

The answers derived through questionnaire, interviews and observation, and the figures taken from primary reports constitute the Database for this study.

For greater validity of research results, all the techniques that fall under the survey method namely, questionnaire, interview, observation and the use of primary reports are used in this study.

A questionnaire was designed to collect data from the 20 autonomous college libraries in Tamil Nadu, listed below, which include three Government colleges, and seventeen private colleges.
List of Autonomous Colleges

1. Arul Andavar College, Karumathur
2. AVC College, Mayiladuthurai
3. A.V.V.M. Sri Pushpam College, Poondi
4. Erode Arts College, Erode
5. Government Arts College, Coimbatore
6. Government Arts College, Kumbakonam
7. Holy Cross College, Tiruchirapalli
8. Loyola College, Chennai.
9. Lady Doak College, Madurai.
10. American College, Madurai
11. Madras Christian College, Chennai
12. Madura College, Madurai
13. Thiyagarajar College, Madurai
14. NGM College, Pollachi
15. Queen Mary’s College, Chennai
16. St. Joseph’s College, Trichirapalli
17. Stella Maris College, Chennai
18. Seethalakshmi Ramasamy College, Tiruchirapalli
19. Sri Ramakrishna Mission Vidyalaya College of Arts and Science, Coimbatore
20. St. Xavier’s College, Palayamkottai.
The questionnaire (see appendix III) is divided into five parts. The first part seeks the background information, history of the college and its libraries. The second part is designed to bring out information on the physical facility such as building, furniture and equipment available in the libraries. The third part seeks information about collection development, journal subscriptions and mode of purchasing. The fourth part seeks information on technical work of the library and also a series of questions that have been posed to the librarians on the services provided by the Librarian.

The last part seeks information on budget and other financial support towards the existing and proposed services.

To assess the present status of the autonomous college libraries in Tamil Nadu and to supplement the data collected through the questionnaire, the investigator visited all the autonomous colleges in the sample and interviewed the librarians.

1.13. PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SOURCES

The relevant primary and secondary sources under the topic have been reviewed. Wherever necessary, the relevant sections of the information are quoted to support the analysis.
Data thus collected have been analysed and presented in a descriptive form with tables. To keep the analysis more meaningful and accurate, statistical techniques such as frequency distribution, percentage analysis and correlation are employed. In addition to the tables for data representation, the data have also been quantified by using bar diagrams. The analysis of data has also been interpreted in the light of other authoritative statements in the subject and other guidelines. To be brief the methodology here is one of a detailed survey of libraries, and the researcher has interpreted it with modern research tools available for data interpretation.

After collecting the data through questionnaire, the researcher visited the colleges and consulted records such as college calendar and annual reports and budget of the college and the records maintained by the librarian.

The data on services available before and after the autonomy were analysed and compared with the standards set by the UGC. By calculating a Weighted Index Number for each library, as part of the analysis, all the twenty libraries are ranked in order of their performance criteria. The final picture that emerges is one of a definitive account of overall progress registered by twenty libraries in Tamil Nadu because of the autonomous status conferred on the colleges in which they function.