CHAPTER VI
Analyzing the Meaning and Practices of University Governance

Public-State and Private Deemed-to-be-university

Introduction

In this Chapter, the thesis substantiates several observations and facts regarding practices old and new and their transition into norms and rationalities; especially a dramatic re-normalisation of work and governing relations. These changes, suggest myriad interpretations and outcomes, about the core functions of the university – research, teaching and extension, arguably aligned with the policy objectives of expansion, equity and excellence.

In the previous chapters, the study describes the organisation and profile of the public-state university (University-I) and private-deemed university (University-II) as the case-in-point. Both chapters, provide an empirical description of the organisation, their actors and the meaning(s) and practice(s) they construct regarding expansion, equity and excellence in the university setup. The case studies capture the variations of governance within the university and across the typology of the university systems. The scholarship is focusing on the external pressures and internal changes on universities in terms of the idea of what a university should be and its core values (see Readings, 1997; Coady, 2000; Giroux & Myrsiades, 2001; Walker & Nixon, 2004). Studies have observed that universities’ internal governance structure is reflective of the external political and economic environment in which the institutions function. The multiple changes within the university structures, as a result of larger economic and political reorientation, however, has not received much attention.

The existing body of literature suggests that university governance should be researched within both macro and micro levels. Thus, larger national and global forces affecting the institutions
of higher learning as well as the development of new forms and practices that emerge within
the ecosystem of the university both highlight interesting shifts and transformations. Much
research, as well as the popular discourse on university governance, tends to focus on official
bodies, their functions, management and strategies. Cuthbert (1996:20) notes that literature on
the nature of academic work is scarce arguing that we need to know more about working in the
university setup.

In this chapter, I fuse the readings on university governance documented by scholars and
institutional biographers with my own field-based interactions and observations. The synthesis
produced from multiple views is used to develop a conceptual apparatus of university
governance. In this way, I am able to connect my field data with the literature in order to map
out the plurality of actors, their functions, interactions and roles.

**Conceptual Issues regarding University Governance**

Given the complexity of university types and shifts in policies in the last few decades, there is
a need for a systemic and systematic approach to examine issues regarding the concept of
university governance as illustrated below (Figure 11).

University governance has largely been understood in terms of the tensions between two kinds
of authority: the legal authority comprising of administrative structures at large and the
professional authority comprising faculty members. According to Kennedy (2003:67,
“governance is about power and authority, who has it and who does not and in whose interest,
it is used.” Power is derived from university statues and rules; however, authority is delegated
to respective individuals by the personnel assuming power. In other words, governance is the
way power and authority are practices in universities as organizations to allocate and manage
available resources. Such practices include implementation of rules and measures for
“decision-making and control in directing or managing organisations for effectiveness (Carnegie and Tuck, 2010: 8)”.

The idea and concept of university governance are complex, especially when higher education systems and its institutions across the globe are witnessing changing conditions of work and learning. The complexity of the concept is due to heterogeneity of practices and ideals as to what constitutes governance in the university in the competitive environment. It is the type and efficacy of governance that determines the role and relevance of the institutions in a globally competitive environment. As Marginson & Considine (2000) argue, that the inner world of the university, is an organic entity, it constantly evolves as a result of changing to the needs and pressures emanating from the ‘inner’ world and the ‘larger environment’ of the university. However, scholarship in the domain of higher education and university governance, especially in the last few decades has shared wide-ranging literature on university governance.

Over the last three decades, however, the self-governance and relative autonomy of universities have given way to the pressures of marketization and logics of performance. Coming to terms with global forces and ideologies has also become an imperative for a number of universities (Rizvi & Lingard, 2011). However, to pursue the analysis here, it is appropriate to recall some of the key definitions and perspectives on university governance. For instance, ‘university governance’ comprises a range of activities dealing with relations of power and the control of conduct, while enabling the agency of the actors having stakes from inner and outer world of the university in order to construct new perspectives for the future of the universities (Rizvi, 2006). Such characteristics of power and agency are the core aspect of transformations within the universities and its changing external world. Governance increasingly seeps into a range of functions of the university – research, teaching and extension demands for a comprehensive and complex level of analysis.
Below, Figure 11 illustrates such a framework of university governance to guide practice and research. The framework encapsulates the logic of the system. The taxonomy of university governance is divided into five dimensions – university actors, management, resources, objective and function – each of these dimensions are represented by elements. (Note: the terms in the framework are defined with examples in the glossary listed in the Annexure IV)

**Figure 11: The Universe of University Governance: Pictorial Representation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University Actors</th>
<th>Management</th>
<th>Resources</th>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Function</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leadership’s</td>
<td>Organisation</td>
<td>Funding</td>
<td>Expansion</td>
<td>Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top management’s</td>
<td>Coordination</td>
<td>Infrastructure</td>
<td>Equity</td>
<td>Teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Univ. Administrators'</td>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td>Personnel</td>
<td>Excellence</td>
<td>Extension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty administrators'</td>
<td>Autonomy</td>
<td>Information</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty member's</td>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>Time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students'</td>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>Location/Space</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Alumni's</td>
<td>Decision making</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Community's</td>
<td>External Regulation</td>
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**Illustrative components:**


Above mentioned illustrative components indicate the pathways for understanding and mapping the array of combinations regarding university governance. The concatenation of an element from each dimension together with connecting words or phrases generates a complete set of components that systematically describe the system of university governance. Thus, the framework encapsulates 3024 (8*7*6*3*3) potential pathways to unpack the internal and the external component of university governance, especially in the public-state and private-deemed university set-up. Each of the 3024 components may be used in multiple ways in practice and
research. The findings presented here, highlight the strengths, weaknesses, and gaps in University-I and University-II and recommend a comprehensive roadmap for the examining and exploring university governance in India.

Figure 11 lists combinations of pathways that encapsulates the inner and outer world of the university and its governance. However, the current framework reflects potential pathways in analysing governance in the public-state and private-deemed university, as the case-in-point. The framework can be extended to other types of universities in India, to unpack myriad pathways of governance in respective universities.

The first (left) dimension, University Actors are the participants in the governance. The actors may be within the university and outside. They may be the university’s top management, leaders, administrators, faculty members, students, alumni, and community members. The administrators may be university or faculty administrators. These categories and subcategories of university actors are represented by the taxonomy in the first column.

The second column of the framework is a taxonomy of management functions entailed in governance. They are an organization, coordination, accounting, autonomy, decision-making, compliance (with regulations), and culture for managing the resources of the university. Combining the first two columns defines the 56 potential roles of the actors in the university - from top management’s role in the organization to community's role in culture and all the combinations in between.

The focus of a university’s governance is its resources. The six key resources are listed in the third dimension. They are funding, infrastructure, personnel, information, time, and location/space. The object of the 56 roles of the actors is to assure that the resources are managed to perform the functions of the university and achieve the objectives.
The three objectives (expansion, equity, and excellence) and the three functions (teaching, research, and extension) are listed in the last two columns. They represent nine possible combinations – from expansion in teaching to excellence in extension and the other in between.

In parallel, a large body of research is emerging on the topic. Consequently, some areas are heavily emphasized because they are (a) important, (b) in fashion, or (c) convenient for research; and others are less emphasized because they are perceived as (a) unimportant, (b) not in fashion, or (c) inconvenient for research. There are also areas which are simply overlooked or are non-feasible. These biases help and hinder the advancement of research and practice in university. For example, emphasis on key areas helps and lack of emphasis on inconvenient areas hinder the advancement of university governance.

Paying close attention to the universe of university governance, I view it as a way the division of power and authority amongst its actors (faculty, administrators, leadership, students, alumni, community) is exercised in the university in the allocation and management of the resources to accomplish its functions (teaching, research and extension). Specific to the university system in India, it is critical to analyze the meaning and practice of university governance in alignment with the policy objectives of expansion, equity and excellence in higher education. Hence, conceptually, university governance encapsulates the ‘inner’ and the ‘outer’ world of the university and the higher education system, respectively.

University governance is shaped by the pressure(s) from the external political environment, and therefore institutions are forced to adopt a form of governance that can adapt to their environment (Salter & Tapper, 2002). This is an important consideration for this study it is necessary to understand how universities operate and change, not in isolation, but as they interact with and are influenced by the outside world. For institutions of higher education, a major change activity such as the restructuring of governance is intimately related to broader
social, political, economic, and historical development nationally, regionally, and globally. Therefore, change in governance should include considerations of the external and internal dynamics.

Higher education scholarship has not paid sufficient attention to the relationship between educational institutions and the government (local, state and other bodies) (Carnoy & Levin, 1986; Ordorika, 2003). Reed, Meek and Jones (2002) point out that any change in the relationship between higher education and the government directly impacts university governance. This is especially important when the governance reform is state-imposed and is a source of conflict about what the university is, what it should be, and the extent of its autonomy. Therefore, understanding the role of the government and its position in higher education and the governance of universities is even more critical when institutions change their governance structure, as a result of internal or/and external pressures.

In higher education research, university governance is viewed from both broader (Amaral et al., 2013; Neave and van Vaught, 1994; Enders et al., 2013) and narrower perspectives (Shattock, 2006; Trackman, 2008; Tight, 2012).” In other words, governance encompasses the internal relationships, the external relationships, and the intersection between the inner world of the university and its larger environment, including the government (Marginson & Considine, 2000). The external relationships, between the state and higher education institutions because of globalisation and higher completion rate in secondary education there the higher education sector is in flux. For instance, because of the huge demand for higher education and the financial, infrastructural and resource limitations of the public institutions in providing access to the aspiring minds, privatisation of higher education was inevitable. Such demands urge substantial reforms in enabling a conducive environment to the actors and institutions associated with the higher education sector. From a narrow perspective, in contrast,
university governance is defined as “the constitutional forms and processes through which universities govern their affairs. Governance extends right through the Senates and academic boards to faculty boards and departmental meetings, and governance is effective when “these levels of governance work together productively” (Shattock, 2006:1). The conceptual framework on university governance (see figure 11), encapsulates the main aspects of the internal and the external environment in University I and II.

**Public-State University (University-I) and Private-Deemed University (University-II)**

It is a challenge to evolve common or homogenous management principles and practices to effectively govern the diverse institutional typology across India. However, from the empirical data, it is evident that there are few commonalities (at least in the two-distinctive type of universities in India) and many differences within the university and across the universities.

*University Governance: Organisation, Leadership and Decision-making*

University as an organisation are complex entities (Bradshaw & Fredette, 2009) and hence often contested (Rytmeister & Marshall, 2007) because of diverse functions, objectives and outcomes. The two case studies described in the previous chapters, substantiate such complexities and contestations by virtue of their type and composition. The position of universities in this context is reflected in policy discourses. However, construction of meanings and practices are differentiated at the level of the university.

The organisational structure of the public-state university (University I), discussed in chapter IV, suggests four broad categories. Firstly, the leadership of the university, i.e., the Chancellor and the Pro-Chancellor. Secondly, the Vice-Chancellor an authority coordinating with the other ‘authorities of the university’ viz., the Syndicate, Academic Council, Finance Committee.

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20 The Karnataka State Universities (KSU) Act, 2000, abolished the erstwhile body i.e., Senate, an elected body coordinating the overall decision-making processes for the university and its members. The Senate is replaced with Syndicate, the Syndicate – the highest decision-making body- constitutes of members within the university (Senior most Deans, VC, Registrar) and members nominated by the State government as per the KSU Act, 2000.
and Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Board (PMEB) on one hand, and ‘officers of the university’ viz., the Registrar, Registrar Evaluation, Finance Officer, the Deans of Faculty of Studies, Library and other Directors, on the other. In other words, the Vice-Chancellor is the operational head of the university and its day-to-day functions. The Radhakrishnan Commission (1948); Kothari Commission (1964) and Gajendragadkar Committee (1971), have strongly recommended that the person who is an eminent educationist must be appointed as the Vice-Chancellor of the university. S/he must be a person with moral stature and good administrative skills. Such were the practices in many universities, especially in the last few decades. The Vice-Chancellor must be a leader who is ‘first among equals’ in any university. However, such policy ideals have limited scope in contemporary scenario among universities. At least, in the two case studies discussed here, the insights from the field suggest an anti-thesis of our erstwhile policy ideals. In the following section, the thesis describes the empirical insights from University-I and II, to substantiate the current issues in two distinct types of universities in the country.

In University-I the Vice-Chancellor is appointed by an expert committee among the list of eligible applicants per Karnataka State Universities (KSU) Act, 2000. The Governor of the State also the Chancellor of the University will appoint the candidate for the post of Vice-Chancellor from the list of names short-listed by the expert committee. In University-I, during the interviews, most of the actors of the university expressed their concerns over the appointment of the current and previous Vice-Chancellor, indicating their angst over the process of appointing a person lacking in basic qualities of a good leader of the university.

For instance, senior faculty members and students in University-I opined that previously some of the VCs of the university was known for being meritorious and magnanimous personalities. They could confront the members of the Syndicate and their decisions and along with other
external political pressures by using their discretionary powers laid down in the KSU Act, 2000. Such practices suggest that the leadership of the university is determined to safeguard the university and its actors from external pressures. Policy discourse in higher education, have had limited insights on the need for such leaders. However, in the recent years, as a number of respondents narrated to me, it hard to find such leaders as public universities are marred by excessive politicisation. Such a scenario is largely due to the lack of effective policy reforms in the appointment of a meritorious Vice-Chancellors with minimal or no interventions by the government or other political authorities. Similarly, the reforms in the appointment of the Registrar (whole-time officer and the custodian of the university records) according to the KSU Act, 2000, has been opposed by the actors of the university, especially the faculty members and faculty administrators. One of the faculty administrator (U1RESFM04) in the university remarked that the amendment to the KSU Act, 2000 in 2013 for the appointment of key administrative positions has resulted into a major conundrum for the overall efficacy of governance in the university. Earlier to the amendment, the key administrative positions were held by members external to the university, personnel of the Indian and/or State Administrative Services. However, since 2013, faculty-members are eligible to be appointed as Registrars and Finance Officers or any other administrative positions (KSU Act, 2000 amendment in 2013). As a result, the overall management of the university is bound with certain personal predispositions, rather than professionalism as such. Such dispositions have been instrumental in affecting the efficacy of decision-making mechanism in the university, leading to tensions among faculty-members.

Faculty members expressed their opposition to such appointments (U1RESFM04) and suggested that there is dire need to amend the act. Such an amendment could ensure that an administrator of the local government will hold key administrative position(s) in the university. Arguably, the ordeal expressed and witnessed by the actors in University-I as a result of the
existing organisation structures and the decision-making processes, have led to many subjective and complex internal conflicts among actors and thereby limiting effective coordination of resources and outcomes, in the university.

Further, one of the former members of the Syndicate and currently a member of the faculty at the university, voiced his concern that the position of the VC, is limited, not by the statute but by the very personality of the leader. He said,

Our VC is popular for calling regular Syndicate meetings, beyond the minimum stipulated number of meetings. This suggests his inability or anxiety to take decisions by himself, by the power vested in him to do so, by the Act…it is evident that the position of the VC is bestowed by the government, not by his eminence (U1RESFM02).

The statutory provisions provide necessary safeguards from the intervention of the Syndicate and its overpowering attitude, but, “it is seldom invoked…which hinders the overall freedom of the university and its agencies…because of weak and dependent leadership (the VC and the Registrar)” (U1RESFM02). Foregoing an elected body i.e., the Senate; lack of good leaders as VC and providing more powers to the Syndicate and its members nominated by the government, has often turned out that government’s views become particularly dominant in Syndicate deliberations and it easily steers university affairs in the government’s favour legitimately (Sifuna, 1998). While public-universities are exposed to such crises in leadership and their functions, the private-deemed universities are exposed to similar concerns regarding the Vice-Chancellor’s and Registrar’s appointment and their leadership roles.

At the level of policy, the UGC proposed to establish deemed universities – public and private (under section 3 of the UGC Act, 1956), to recognise and upgrade institutions of higher learning for their incisive contribution to higher education across myriad academic disciplines. As
discussed in the previous chapters, the Deemed-to-be-Universities Act (DUA), 2010 provides autonomy such institutions to evolve their curriculum, research strategy and appointments to a key position, with the nominal representation of the UGC. Because of this, deemed universities – private or public – are accountable to the UGC at the central level, rather than the respective State government as is the case in the public-state universities.

However, analysing the actual practices and meanings adopted by one of the private-deemed university in Karnataka – University-II – as the case in point, it is important to note the gaps between policy ideals and practices within the university. In other words, the external and internal world of the university does not converge. Ideally, they should be doing so. For instance, according to the DUA, 2010, the President of the trust establishing the university exercises the privilege of being the Chancellor. The Chancellor constitutes the committee to search Vice-Chancellor for the university. The committee constitutes of four members – one nominee of the Chancellor (who is the chair of the committee), a nominee of the UGC, a nominee of the university Board of Management (BoM) and a nominee of the Academic Council of the university. In University-II, the Chancellor is the eldest son of the founder of the university and the BoM, and Academic council are internal bodies of the university. The nominee of the UGC is the only external member of the selection committee.

It is evident that the prospective leadership of the university is identified by the members within the university, unlike the public-state university wherein the search committee members are external to the university, as such. The actors in University-II expressed their views on the Vice-Chancellor and his leadership attributes.

According to my field notes, most of the actors in University-II opined that the candidate for the position of the Vice-Chancellor is often a trusted member of the sponsoring Trust. The Board selects a Vice-Chancellor who has served the university as faculty-member for at least
a couple of decades. The potential candidates for the top-positions are closely observed by the members of sponsoring Trust. Subsequent to this, s/he is nominated by the Chancellor to the committee as per the DUA, 2010 formally, however, the choice of the candidate is pre-determined by the members of the sponsoring Trust, implicitly. Evidence from the interviews indicates subtle preferences in the choice of candidates for top-management. Members of the Trust, the top-management, since its inception, preferred, those members of the faculty for leadership positions not necessarily on merit but candidate’s caste, locality or region and if the s/he is an alumnus of University-II or one of the Institutions of National Importance. According to one of the members of the top-management, an alumnus and/or a native of the region, can be preferred for an appointment for higher administrative positions since, they are more loyal, committed and trustworthy, then an outsider (U2RESADMIN05). Thereby indicating caste, loyalty, trust and previous association with the university as an important prerequisite for selecting the leadership for the university. Similarly, the selection for the position of the Registrar(s) and Heads of constituent institutions of the university are premised on these preferences. It can be argued that, because of such intangible preferences identifying leaders for the university, there exists discontent among several members.

Thus, understanding the selection and performance of leadership and their roles in University-I and University-II is critical to analysing the concept of university governance. The politicisation of appointment in University-I, has received limited or no respect among the faculty-members to the position of the Vice-Chancellor and the Registrar, potential affecting the morale and commitment amongst the actors of the university. Whereas in University-II, though the Vice-Chancellor and the Registrar are members internal to the university, identified on certain preferential criteria, the satisfaction with the leadership among the actors is better considering governance mechanisms are decentralised and streamlined. Hence, there is limited scope for political interventions in the overall functioning of the university. Pressures on the
leadership of the university are exerted by the members of the sponsoring Trust, which are internal to the university per se.

Arguably, the division of power and authority in University-I is not so streamlined, as compared to University-II. For instance, according to the Karnataka State Universities Act, 2000, the Syndicate is the highest decision-making body in University-I, however, the VC has certain discretionary powers to override the authority of the Syndicate, on a case-by-case basis (especially not in the context of the current VC of University-I, but select VCs in the past), hence, suggesting a normative practice. In University-II, the power and authority vests with the Board of Management and decision made by the board is seldom overturned by the Vice Chancellor. Such top-down processes have streamlined coordination and decision-making mechanisms, but it is not so conducive for the overall academic and administrative autonomy to achieve excellence in the core functions of the university.

Aligned to the issues of leadership conundrum, another important function of the public-state university is to engage with the affiliation system. The system of affiliation is considered to a major challenge for public-state universities, demanding major policy revamp in such a system (Powar, 2002; RUSA, 2011; Planning Commission (12th Five-year Plan), 2012; Choudaha 2013). Several committee reports and the National Policy on Education (1968, 1986) have emphasized on addressing the need to revisit such a system but expressed concerns over abolishing the same (Thakur & Berwal, 2008). The government has initiated series of reforms to encourage affiliating colleges to evolve as autonomous colleges or deemed-to-be-universities based on the accreditation benchmarks by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), an autonomous agency of the UGC. For the public-state universities, affiliation to colleges is one of the ways to expand its reach and functions mainly
to the periphery. Through this, such universities enable accessibility while addressing concerns of equity.

For University-II engaging with the affiliation, system constitutes as one of the core organisational function. Affiliation systems extend the scope of the university beyond its campus. Thus, public-state universities are exposed to dual challenges, i.e., pursue excellence in education on campus and ensure appropriate reach to the critical mass demanding undergraduate programmes, as a mandate. In the private-deemed universities, affiliation is pursued by choice, especially in extending off-shore campuses, internationally.

The affiliation system, as discussed in Chapter IV, is both a boon and a bane for University-I. It acts as a boon because the university through its affiliating institutes across the jurisdiction reaches out to the rural and semi-urban areas, it enhances accessibility to students also the revenue generated by the affiliation fees is a major source of finance for the university. However, it is considered as a bane in ensuring effective administration and limits focus on research and innovation among administrators and faculty-members, respectively.

For private-deemed universities, University-II, there is no such mandate. However, University-II has been a pioneer in expanding its reach in the international arena. The university boasts of setting-up robust international campuses, harnessing its revenue while creating an international brand-value. The latter is an essential parameter in assessing the excellence per regional and global ranking methodologies. As a matter of fact, University-II has figured among the top private universities in the QS (Quacquarelli Symonds) World, Asia and BRICS ranking league table. Such an approach is important, given the recent policy initiatives21 by the government.

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(UGC, 2017) encouraging universities to compete in the world rankings to seek academic and financial autonomy.

From the university’s organisation and leadership perspectives, University-II values such an approach to expansion to engage in promoting excellence as compared to University-I wherein expansion through its affiliation system aims at prioritising equity by providing accessibility to the critical mass of aspirants, especially the first-generation learners.

**University Governance: Autonomy and Accountability**

Today “universities suffer from poor governance, insufficient autonomy and often perverse incentives” (Aghion et al. 2007: 34). Enabling autonomy with meaningful accountability across higher education institutions has been one of the core ideals of the policies since independence. The Radhakrishnan Commission (1948); Kothari Commission (1946); Committee on University Organisation and Administration (1967) and the National Policy on Education 1968 and 1986 and many others have envisioned a university system as ‘autonomous communities’ in the pursuit of learning and excellence. However, these policy ideals have limited scope and significance when it comes to actual meaning and practices at the university level. Insights from University-I and University-II, discussed in previous chapters, reveal instances of constraints on the academic, administrative and financial autonomy experienced by the actors of both the universities.

Majority of the senior members of the faculty and students in University-I expressed their discontent with the intervention(s) of the Syndicate into the day-to-day affairs of the university. The Syndicate is the highest decision-making body of the university, but it is a body external to the day-to-day functioning of the university. Syndicate exercising authority over academic and administrative matters like – revisions in the curriculum, determining student in-take, the appointment of the faculty and staff, expanding affiliation to colleges, infrastructure
development is the biggest constraint on enabling autonomy in the university. Further, these
decisions are often based on affiliations to caste, region, and linguistic basis than on merit and
objective criteria that has not only curtailed autonomy but have been detrimental to the
academic and administrative culture and quality in the university. Such interventions cannot be
categorised as a purely bureaucratic form of university governance, considering the above-
mentioned subjective criteria for favouring certain decisions that go beyond the legal-rational
system of bureaucratic processes. Political representation in the Syndicate is trying to force
their will upon the university, bring into line the political model of university governance. In
fact, the Gajendragadkar Committee (1971) on suggesting reforms in university governance
aptly encapsulates such limitations by making the following observations – “the concept of
university autonomy means that it would be appropriate on the part of the democratic
legislatures not to interfere with the administration of university life, both academic and non-
academic. The universities make a claim for autonomy not as a matter of privilege, but because
such autonomy is a condition precedent if the universities are to discharge their duties and
obligations effectively and efficiently”. In public-state universities emphasis is laid on the need
for internal autonomy by safeguarding the university from external influences.

Juxtaposed to this, University-II, according to the DUA, 2010 enjoys autonomy from external
bodies in evolving the internal administrative set-up. Autonomy in appointing key members of
the university (the Vice-Chancellor, the Registrar(s), Heads of Constituent institutions, faculty-
members and admission of students). Recalling insights from the field (see Chapter V detailed
discussion), the members of the sponsoring Trust, the Executive Committee and the Board of
Management (BoM) exercise their autonomy not only appointing the leaders but providing
strategic directions/vision for the university. In consultation with the members of the Trust, and
the Executive Committee (EC) provides autonomy to the VC and the Registrar to engage with
academic functions of the university, but not so much in matters viz., infrastructure
development, determining fees, internationalisation, admission through management quota, affiliation to research centers, sanction of leave/sabbatical, promotions and so on. Such interventions are often seen as a challenge to the overall autonomy of the university and its functions. Such a system hinders autonomy of the Vice-Chancellor and Registrar(s) to go beyond or deviate, especially in academic matters, from the said directions or vision in the interest of the subordinate actors of the university.

While autonomy is limited in exercising leadership roles in University-I and II, there exist differentiated experiences amongst the actors within the university set-up. Committees reports and policies engaged in reforming the university system suggest robust participation of all actors as an essential ingredient of autonomy within the university. The Gajendragadkar committee (1971) has urged universities to eradicate ‘bossism of senior members’ and ensure opportunities for participation of all stakeholders in the overall functioning of the university.

Both in University-I and II, there is limited scope for comprehensive and collective participation for all the actors in the university and its decision-making processes. Internally, the actors of the university are subject to several layers of accountability to their respective ‘bosses’. In University-I, accountability within the faculty-members and to the internal administration is limited vis-à-vis experiences in University-II. In University-I most of the faculty-members full-time permanent employ of the state government, making them bold and less submissive to authorities internal to the university. However, as a matter of fact, in many instances, such freedom and confidence do not necessarily harness autonomy to pursue excellence in their core functions. The comfort of permanence in one’s position especially in the context of performance-based tenure is a blessing in disguise for most of the public universities, including University-I. Further, in University-I, students have no formal representation in university administration and governance structures viz., syndicate and academic council. As mentioned above, to evolve an effective participatory mode of
governance, there is a need for representation of all actors to engage in decisions on university’s management and resources to achieve its objectives.

In addition to issues related to the internal autonomy of the university, there are series of pressures exerted due to external factors from the government and the market viz., universities as agents fulfilling the project of a knowledge-based economy. Given the fact that universities are exposed to pressures from external rules and regulations a concurrent approach of governance is necessitated, i.e., introducing managerialism as a mode of governance in the university. Because of this, intellectual work is regulated and managed in new ways: by restructuring the system and its agencies creating complex layers of hierarchies, externally and through imposing accountability mechanisms within institutions, internally. Because of this, the autonomy of the university and its actors to govern is significantly reduced. For instance, the performance-based assessment system in University-I and II, unpack critical insights into the practice of managerialism in the university set-up.

The Academic Performance Index (API), introduced by the UGC to achieve excellence has enabled several resistances and thereby exposing tensions and conflicts among the actors especially the faculty-members of the university. The API scores are critical for faculty-members to seek career advancement during their tenure. In University-I, faculty-members consider addressing the needs of first-generation learners by engaging in teaching as their main function and as the core objective of the university. Most of the students enrolled in the university come from a vernacular and rural background and hence need specific care and attention by the teachers for successful completion of their education programme. However, for most of the faculty-members, the API gives limited weightage to teaching as compared to

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22Managerialism is characterised by separation of academic work and management activity; control and regulation of intellectual work by designated mangers; emphasis on productivity and revenue generation and competition for resources (Gordon and Whitchurch, 2010).
research and consultancy services. According to some of the faculty-members, success in effective teaching and providing knowledge to students who have difficulty in assimilating and responding to the curriculum is the true measure of excellence, not our publications and conference attendance. For them, accountability is to students who are the key stakeholders in the university, and not self-development in terms of research and consultancy activities.

For a public-state university, such measures of accountability ignore the core purpose and constituency of the university and its overall objective. There is a need to revisit such measures to make them appropriate to the core functions of the universities addressing concerns of equity and expansion rather than excellence per policy ideals.

However, in the private-deemed universities aligned to the policy rationale of providing autonomy to institutions to achieve academic excellence especially in research has been infused by institutions, internally. For instance, in University-II, in addition to the UGC API scores performance of the faculty-members are measured by an internal performance management system annually. The performance metrics are reviewed periodically at several levels to review appointments while rewarding and incentivising best performers.

Juxtaposed to perspectives in University-I, faculty-members in University-II have mixed opinion on such a system. Few of the faculty-members expressed their displeasure, but many opined that there is a need for such a system to reward those who work hard and check those members who are not performing well. The assessment of performance is based on following broad parameters – personal quality, academic activities, professional and allied competencies and continuous learning and self-development initiatives. It is interesting to note that faculty-members in University-II, especially in their initial stages of a career as Lecturers/Assistant Professors expressed contentment with performance management system. According to them, those who work hard, the system is such that, they will be recognised and rewarded
accordingly. There is limited or no scope for biasness or nepotism or favouritism of any kind to seek recognition and rewards. For those who don’t take the ownership of their roles, they will find it difficult to assimilate into the performance management system. The decision of the top-management, to make this university as one of the world-class university, binds each of actors of the university and their functions for a common objective/purpose.

It is evident that excellence in education is the new policy directive of the government. However, such regulations measuring the performance of the actors of the university using such homogenous metrics hinders the autonomy of the university and coercing universities to re-prioritize their roles and ideals in the private and public universities, respectively. In other words, over the last three decades, the self-governance and relative autonomy of universities have given way to the pressures of marketization and logics of performance. Coming to terms with global forces and ideologies has also become an imperative for a number of universities (Rizvi & Lingard, 2011).

*University Governance: Academic Culture and Coordination*

Academic culture in the university constitutes of activities related to teaching, learning and research on campus and outside. Universities are complex organizations with a unique set of features (Baldridge, 1971). Challenges in coordination among the actors hinder the overall academic culture (Sporn, 1996) of the universities. Unlike many profit-making organizations, universities have certain characteristics that need to be understood (Birnbaum, 1988) and that dominate the culture of academic institutions. First, their goals are ambivalent. Different objectives and standards in teaching, research, and service, as well as lack of agreement on guidelines for goal achievement, resulting in an ambiguous decision-making process. Secondly, the culture of an organization is grounded in the shared assumptions of individuals participating in the organization. Often taken for granted by the actors themselves, these
assumptions can be identified through stories, special language, norms, institutional ideology, and attitudes that emerge from individual and organizational behaviour. Clark (1981) has suggested that the ideology or culture of academic organizations is much more complex than that of other organizations. Ideologies, or systems of belief, permeates into academic institutions at least at three different levels: the culture of the enterprise, the culture of the academic profession at large, and the culture of academic discipline. Cultural practices in the university are rooted in the overall professionalism and non-professionalism among the actors and their functions.

In University-I, the interpersonal relationship amongst various actors is complex. The university hosts a diverse set of students and faculty-members representing myriad caste, class and regional affiliations. Such diversity provides various avenues for collegiality and conflicts among the actors. In University-I, students express certain discontent with preferential treatment to certain students in admissions to the doctoral programme. One of the doctoral students opined, faculty-members in this university are known for preferring students from their caste/community and region during PhD admission process, and some of them hire project assistants, on these criteria (U2RESSTU14). Such belief-systems are deep rooted in the organisational and cultural practices within the university. However, such practices lead to the certain notion of stigmatization on campus. Some of the students in University-I, expressed their concerns about listing their name on the notice board indicating the scholarship they avail to sustain their education. These scholarships are categorised for students from the marginalised communities/castes and economically weaker sections. Such open-display of names and their affiliations are opposed by few students, whereas few of them are proud of their affiliations. Those who are not in favour of such a system feel out-casted and left-out when they are unable to conceal their socio-economic identities. Such observations on campus in University-I indicate the practice of caste-system in educational institutions even to this day.
The higher education policies have promoted the ideal of providing accessibility to all but do not reflect on addressing issues related to such experiences on campus potentially demoralizing students to pursue their higher education without any prejudices and predispositions. Further, in University-I, internationalisation is promoted through admissions to students from many countries. The campus is vibrant with international students, coming from various countries. However, some of the female international students face humiliation in classrooms over appropriate and not-so-appropriate cultural practices. For instance, one of the students from Iran, studying in master’s was comfortably positioned with her leg crossed in the classroom. A faculty-member during the lecture asked her to stand-up and criticised her for sitting cross-legged in her classroom. According to him, sitting cross-legged in the classroom is not an appropriate cultural practice in the local culture, and hence it is indecent.

Arguably, public-universities must address such issues by introducing a comprehensive and cohesive professional ethics to the actors in the university. In University-II, most of the communications with regard to scholarship and loans is pursued via emails. There are such practices that express sensitive to the privacy of the students and their profile. However, such practices don’t erase individual’s caste identities but provide an opportunity to engage with the peers without any prejudices and predispositions.

As mentioned earlier, the structure of the organisation in both the universities derived (see figure 6 and 9) reflect the administrative-legal roles and functions of the actors in the university. The structure of the organisation does not clearly indicate the larger processes of politics, social setting, individual preferences, personal and professional conflicts and cooperation across schools/departments and individual faculty members and administration and other actors exposing a dynamic environment for governing the university. These dynamics constitute an important aspect of university and its governance. These dynamics vary by leader, actors and
external context of the university and its setting. The quality of teaching, research and extension activities of the university is dependent on the quality of academic culture in the university setting.

Empirical data from University-I highlights few insights on the organisation and its academic culture. The attitude and behaviour of actors with each other and its overall impact on the lived experiences insightful to deconstruct the relationship between academic culture and management. Faculty members and students in University-I, come from diverse backgrounds in terms of caste, academic disciplines, geographic areas/region, language, economic well-being and so on. Such a diversity for a university could be an opportunity or/and a challenge. Whereas, in University-II, the profile of the university and its actors, is largely homogenous, expect diversity in terms of regional representation, especially students who come from various parts of the country and abroad.

The academic culture between University I and II can be characterised as something that ranges between ‘competition and collegiality’. University-I has more permanent faculty as compared to faculty members under protobinary and contractual appointment subjected to annual performance assessment. Given such a scenario, it is evident that, for a faculty member in University-II, S/he must perform on a continuous basis and be in good-books of the Head of the Institution. Whereas in University-I, there are limited pressures and constraints to retain one’s services. However, the faculty must have requisite API score for career progression, but not necessarily for retaining or continuing the existing position. A performance-based profession, especially in an academic environment, there is limited scope for any sought of informal and collegial communication and environment, respectively. As a result of this, University-II associates itself with the corporate style managerialism in the day-to-day activities of the university in contrast to University-I, wherein members of the faculty and
administration is free from the pressure of competition and experience an environment of collegiality across the campus. Though there are conflicts, not related to academic or professional, but largely due to other social and political reasons.

Another interesting aspect of academic culture in University I and II is the culture of appointment of faculty members. In University I, there is a nation-wide call for applications for positions, but as a matter of fact, most of the applicants are from the state of Karnataka. Most of the candidates who have completed their graduation and post gradation in the vernacular medium in the state prefer public state universities as their career destination. Teaching in public universities are often bilingual – the native/vernacular language and English. However, in University-II, most of the faculty members are from the local state and remaining from across the nation and globe.

Evidence from the field indicates that most of the faculty members in University-II, no doubt represents regional and socio-economic diversity, most of them are an alumnus of the university. At the outset, the university is proud of associating their alumnus to with the mission and functions of the university. However, such act of in-breeding of faculty-members exposes more disadvantages than advantages. As mentioned above, an alumnus of the university would get higher preference over others for top administrative positions, similarly, for faculty positions, the similar preferences are followed. Why is in-breeding of faculty-members a concern for the overall academic culture in University-II? Most of the faculty members (as mentioned above are from the same university) who are also pursuing their doctoral studies in the same long with teaching in the same department/institute. Pursing PhDs and teaching in the same department, creates an anxious and hierarchical space for the new and junior faculty-members. For instance, few of the Assistant Professors who are pursuing their PhDs with senior faculty members of the department/institution shared their ordeal on how they are exposed to
various points of command and control. They had to do all the departmental work of their PhD supervisors. Such a relationship in a university is aspiring towards excellence, and world class research limits autonomy and innovation amongst the young minds of the university. Aligned to the race for world-class universities and rankings, the top-administration in University-I, increasing the number of PhDs among young faculty members in their own departments will promote excellence, which is further reflected in the world-ranking league tables. For instance, the Registrar of the University: “PhDs are one of the visible outcomes of excellence in research, PhD is a valve which provides research output, and hence provide global visibility in the world ranking system” (U2RESADMIN03).

In University-I, various aspects of caste and regional affiliations reflect among faculty-members and their day-to-day practices. Professionalism among faculty members and administrative staff is rather limited in University-I, as result of such affiliations. Individual’s knowledge or expertise, often gets secondary preference as compared to their social, economic and other informal affiliations for collaborative work. Preferences based on such affiliations constitute the academic microcosm of actors and their relationship. At the outset, the kind of collaborations is the result of internal collegiality or share beliefs and preferences, that is beyond statutory provisions. As a result of this, the core functions of the university are affected by such informal practices constituting the internal world of the university and its governance. Such subtle practices, norms and their influence on formal activities of the university and its governance, are detrimental to the functionality and dysfunctionality of the university. For instance, a female faculty-member, shared her experience, saying: ‘the caste dynamics and caste-based favouritism within faculty and administrators are very evident here. In addition to this, I have also seen linguistic and regional biases being practiced in this university’ (U1RESFM09). Similarly, one of the student members of the university pursuing doctoral research opined, ‘faculty-members are the key agents of propagating caste and gender
inequalities among us – we witness this in classrooms and outside…however, there are very few faculty-members who are very professional and ethical in these matters (U2RESSTU14).

Such preferences, in an organisation, expose certain challenges in streamlining governance in the university. Preferences, based on caste, language and region creates many cultures and subcultures in an organisation, with multiple affiliations and authorities.

The actors and their roles are interlinked, such informal associations and affiliations in the day-to-day functioning of the university expose many constrains and tensions, as discussed above. The policies on higher education, often underscore such tensions on campus and hence reforms to overcome these are missing. A robust university governance system must provide mechanisms to overcome de-professionalisation by introducing healthy competition and collegiality. A system of self-governance must be replaced with a system of shared-governance to ensure excellence with equity and expansion.

As this chapter argues, there is an urgent need to streamline university governance in India, and it may not happen simply through prescription. The governance is caught up in the contradictory pressures and policies involving qualification, access, autonomy, accountability and political pressures.

While in University-II, the system of coordination and decision-making is streamlined, but there is a need to harness autonomy and trust among the actors by imposing new methods of accountability, i.e., beyond quantitative metrics. A ground-up system is likely to have scope for building a collegial culture and ambience on campus and across faculty-members. It promotes and proliferates collective or shared-governance system rather than competition and outcome-based university system.
In summary, the chapter highlights some of the key insights into university governance mechanisms across two types of universities in India. University-I represents the public-state university whereas University-II is one of the Private-Deemed universities in the country. The framework developed in this chapter lists numerous pathways to identify, map and analyse governance in the university. Currently, the framework is limited to two types of the university as the case-in-point. However, the framework can be adopted and adapted to another type of universities in the country. Although the core dimensions (or verticals) of the framework, i.e., actors, management, resources, functions and objectives remain constant, the underlying elements are dynamic and can be altered as per type of the university and the larger milieu of the university.

Subsequent to this, the study has used the framework to analyse the findings from the field in University-I and University-II across four themes reflecting eight elements under the management vertical of the framework (see fig. 11): organisation, leadership and decision-making; autonomy, accountability and external regulations and academic culture and coordination. Each of these elements interfaces with resource dimension, i.e., personnel, information, location, infrastructure and funding issues within the university (University-I and University-II). The framework developed in the chapter highlights the interactive sphere occupied by the multiple actors who are part of the system of higher learning.