CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

*University Governance in India: The way forward*

India is witnessing a phase of transformation in the system of higher education and its constituent units – the universities. The complex typology of universities with a diverse set of objectives and prioritization of their functions has enabled a system which is characterized with ‘significant islands of excellence—and the system overall is a sea of mediocrity’ (Altbach, 2014). As result of this, critical reforms towards expansion, equity and excellence, have transformed the Indian higher education system and its institutions, particularly in the last two decades. The ideals of expansion, equity and excellence have been the foundation of Indian higher education system and its reforms (Tilak, 2013), since-independence.

Nevertheless, the priorities and interpretations of these ideals have been evolving. Such a shift arguably has been, in response to the changing external environment, and sometimes due to the changing governance structures and practices in universities. The latter has been compounded by the emergence of new types of universities. Governance in the university encompasses the internal and the external environments, and the intersection between the inner world of the university and the larger milieu in which it exists (Marginson & Considine, 2000; Salter & Tapper, 2002 & Ordorika, 2003).

The shifts in the profile of these ideals could be attributed to changes in the meaning and practices of governance across several types of universities and vice-versa. The ideals of reforms and the governance and practices of universities are deeply intertwined. The thesis presents empirical insights on the shifts in the policy ideals and meaning and practices of university governance in the public-state (University-I) and private-deemed university (University-II) in the state of Karnataka, as the case-in-point.
Analysis of higher education policies post-independence was used to map the trajectory of core ideals of the policies guiding the growth and development of higher education in the country. Higher education in India has deep roots in its ancient and colonial wisdom and rule. Universities in India have evolved. Universities in India, have since its establishment in post-independence have been modelled on the three universities established in 1857 - Madras, Bombay and Calcutta presidencies under the British rule.

As result of this and limited interventions in reforming the university systems, most of the public universities have been considered as teaching and examination-centers with limited or no focus on research as such. As discussed in the thesis, University-I reveals certain challenges in ensuring focus on research considering its primary task is to ensure accessibility to all, affiliation to colleges and to conduct examinations on campus and in institutions under jurisdiction. In University-II, as result of being a private entity and a non-affiliating institution, the core agenda is to ensure quality education to those who can afford and ensure an emphasis on research to increase the brand value of the university in the country and the globe.

The conceptual framework discussed in Chapter VI illustrates the insights from the review of the literature and further updated and validated during the field work at University-I and II. The framework has provided necessary dimensions to understand and analyse university governance in the larger context of policy ideals – expansion, equity and excellence in higher education. It was evident that empirical insights on university governance and its implications on the university’s actors, management, resources, objective and functions across the dominant type of universities in India, is limited and outdated. Some of the earliest insights on the dimensions of the university and its governance was illustrated by Harold Gould (1972) took account of the nature of entrepreneurship in the field of education after independence; study of University of Mysore by Glyn Wood (1972), especially exploring the historical and communal
setting during the establishment of University; I.A. Gilbert (1972) studied the concerns and challenges of autonomy of the institutions of higher education (in Presidency college, Kolkata; Muir Central College, Allahabad; and Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College, Aligarh); Rudolph and Rudolph (1972) investigated the problems of autonomy and politicization in the context of the functioning of MS University (Baroda); Carolyn M. Elliott (1972) examined the issues of autonomy and politicization in Osmania University, Hyderabad and Philip Altbach (1974) analysing students union in Bombay University. Subsequent to such interventions with regard to examining governance or related domains in universities in India there is a major void, enabling a dire need for such interventions in the contemporary context. The current project of examining the meaning and practice of governance in universities is mandated considering the anxiety and exciting in constructing World Class Universities as the vision led by the Ministry of HRD at the policy level and respective universities at the micro level.

The empirical insights from the field contributed to the robustness of the framework and its analysis. This is an important contribution made by the study to the domain of higher education and university governance. In addition to illustrating the landscape of policy-shifts (chapter 3) and an in-depth descriptive-analysis of the inner world of public-state (University I) and private-deemed university (University II), the study has evidenced that there are points of convergence and divergence in the external and internal world of the higher education policies and the university, respectively. For instance, in University-II the changing discourses on policy have been appropriated vis-à-vis University I. In University-I, the dominant focus is on equity followed by expansion, with limited emphasis on excellence. Whereas in University II, the primary focus is on excellence followed by expansion and equity. These variations indicate differentiated priorities in terms of the functions in University I and II. In University I, teaching followed by research and extension constitute as its core functions whereas, in University II, priority is on research, teaching and extension, respectively.
The members of the top-management, faculty-administrator’s, university-administrator’s engagement with management and resources in University-II is critical to the overall objective and function of the university. In University-I, faculty-administrators, university-administrators and faculty-members play an important role in determining the objective and functions of the university.

Combination of semi-structured interviews and non-participant observations during the field work has been one of the unique methodological projects to understand and analyse university governance in University I and II. Identifying two distinct but popular types of universities as the case-in-point has provided insights into the various models of governance in the university.

In sum, the main findings of the thesis have contributed to the larger discourse of higher education governance in general and higher education institutions in particular. Chapter 1 elucidates the need and relevance of studying university governance; Chapter 2 describes the methodological approach to map, understand and analyse the contours of higher education policies and university governance; Chapter 3 maps the landscape of higher education policies, with an emphasis on post-independence developments; Chapter 4 and 5 provides a descriptive-analytical account of governance in University-I and II in the last couple of decades, respectively and in Chapter 6 the thesis presents the core findings of the study interfacing with university governance in University-I and II and the reforms there-in.

Key Recommendations
The exploration and examination of issues related to higher education policies and university governance and their meaning and practices have been instrumental in suggesting following a set of recommendations. First, there is an utmost need to pursue institutional case-studies across the country while analyzing systemic changes. Second, there is a need to revisit our policy on higher education enabling an evidence-based policy framework as the way. Currently, the
higher education policies in retrospect are expert and experience driven and not evidence driven. Hence, most of the issues at the micro level, i.e., the inner world of the university (at least in the case of University I and II) are not reflected in the policies at the macro level. Third, analysis of both the universities suggests that there is a need for re-prioritization of the functions of the university, especially in the public-state universities to accommodate the current trends and pressures within the nation and across the globe. Finally, the issue of autonomy and accountability amongst the actors of the university continue to be an issue for many decades and needs to be addressed. The idea of achieving excellence with equity is still a conundrum across universities, which is the need of the hour.

Limitations of the Study
Governance is becoming increasingly important in universities as the result of pressures from external and internal to the universities. The thesis analyses governance in two most popular types of universities in the country. The detailed cases studies are an account of incisive research in the field and describe how governance structures are mediated by the external and internal issues. The thesis presents the most contemporary and current account of governance and its reforms in the university set-up and in the policies of higher education in the country.

Going forward the approach, the conceptual framework on university governance and the methodology adopted by the study could contribute in examining similar or other types of universities, to provide a comprehensive description and analyses of university governance across the country.

The study is limited by the overall representativeness in analyzing the scope of university governance across all types of the university across the country. University I and II, identified as case studies for this study characterizes a limited number and type of the university across the country. The analysis and findings presented here, reflect the inner world of University I
and II and their linkages with the external environment. Universities are living organisms; it is important to contextualize its evolution and existence. However, the study provides a robust conceptual framework on university governance enabling further research across type and number of universities.

The conceptual framework illustrates many constants that represent for instance the core functions of the university. Irrespective of the university type, location and size the core functions of any university will be teaching, research and/or service. It is the larger prioritization of these functions which differentiates or categorizes universities by types and roles, which needs to be explored and examined. The findings of the study could be further substantiated by pursuing research on public state universities and private-deemed universities across the country or region to seek to validate the findings presented here. In addition to pan-India cross-institutional studies, there is a scope for a cross-country comparative research study.