

Chapter VI

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CHAPTER VI

LADY DOAK COLLEGE, MADHURAI, PROFILE OF AN AUTONOMOUS COLLEGE

6.1. INTRODUCTION

One of the objectives of the study was to bring out a profile of one of the colleges which may be outstanding in certain respects. Each college has something or other to make it unique and outstanding on its own right and so the selection of one from among them was very difficult. After considering various aspects the choice was made on Lady Doak College, Madurai. Many notable points in the functioning of this college are discussed in the chapter. Apart from these aspects, one of the prominent reasons for selecting it was that it has a considerable amount of documentation of the processes and the programmes in the college right from the very beginning when the college started thinking about autonomy. Secondly, this college was willing to make available these documents for inspection and study. Thirdly, the principal of this college was willing to listen and to speak and to be helpful. Hence the choice of Lady Doak College for this profile analysis.

The Lady Doak College (LDC) was established in July, 1948 in the not so central locality of Madurai township at that time. It was founded by Miss Katie Wilcox, an American Missionary, as a Christian institution with the objective of giving liberal

education to the women flock of Madhura district and surroundings.

It started functioning on 14th July, 1948. At present there are nearly 1200 students and 95 staff members. The college runs Post-graduate and under-graduate programmes in Arts, Science and Commerce disciplines. It has got an annual intake of 350 students with an annual budget of nearly Rs.35 lakhs. The college has facility to accommodate 360 students in the hostels. It has got a well-equipped library with 53,997 volumes. It subscribes to more than 50 journals and periodicals. The library functions from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. A section of the library is open at night between 8.00 p.m. to 10.00 p.m, for reference and reading only. A book bank also functions in connection with the library.

6.2. MILESTONES IN THE HISTORY OF THE COLLEGE

Lady Doak College, Madhurai, started functioning in 1948 with 81 students in its roles. In 1951 degree courses were introduced and in 1961 it got permanent affiliation to the then University of Madras and also started post graduate courses. In 1966 it became affiliated to the newly started Madhurai Kamaraj University, Madhurai, and initial steps were taken to think and plan for autonomy. In 1976 the semester system was incorporated in the college. In 1977 it submitted to the University Grants Commission the final comprehensive proposal for autonomous functioning, and in 1978, the Revised Proposal based on the UGC Commission's suggestions. In 1978 the college

was granted autonomy by the Madhurai Kamaraj University with the concurrence of the UGC and the State Government.

6.3. CONFERRING OF AUTONOMY TO THE COLLEGE.

In preparation for autonomy revised goals and objectives were established for the college as a whole and for each department separately and even for each course offered. Autonomy was conferred upon the college in the year 1977-78 and now it has completed a full eleven year course under autonomy. This college comes under the jurisdiction of Madhurai Kamaraj University.

Autonomy as an innovation in higher education in India was a welcome proposal for Lady Dock College, and the faculty and management were for it and had a certain amount of preparedness to implement it. According to the documents available and from the interviews with the faculty, the college started preparations for autonomy right from 1965 onwards when the Kothari Education Commission visited the college.

Even before the arrival of autonomy as an innovation this college was innovative in many respects. It had innovative practices such as Orientation for new students, Five Day Intensive English Course to all the freshers, Courses on Ethical and Religions Studies, The College School Complex, Department of Extension Programmes, Semester System, etc.

6.4. MOTIVES OF LADY DOCK COLLEGE TO OPT FOR AUTONOMY

(1) Concern to be of service to the women population of the area through change, innovation and adaptation was the main thrust for the management.

(2) Concern for the pupil (77.78%) and credibility in the society (50%) were the main thrust for the interest group to implement the programme.

(3) To make education more meaningful and prepare the students to face the real world and to make them autonomous persons capable of assuming responsibilities and taking own decisions were the rationale for the innovation of autonomy. The major objectives of the innovation were to raise the quality of education at par with international levels, to suit the needs of the students and the people, to make the students independent, self-reliant, useful to the nation, to make teaching and learning a creative and pleasurable activity, etc..

(4) Making the learning system relevant and meaningful, maximum utilization of the available resources for the benefit of the students and the society, desire for creative changes, challenges to experiment with the new system, desire for academic freedom and opportunities, students gaining knowledge at an advanced level, study of application oriented subjects, avoiding examination fears, designing a useful curriculum, bringing about innovations in teaching, learning and testing processes, doing away with out-moded topics, getting feedbacks

by continuous evaluation, providing better academic atmosphere for the students, etc., were the motivational factors according to the sampled teachers and according to the documents prepared by the faculty in preparation for autonomy for their acceptance of the innovation of autonomy in Lady Doak College.

6.5. A TASK FORCE FOR INTRODUCING AUTONOMY TO THE COLLEGE.

As mentioned above, the Kothari Education Commission (1966) recommendations about granting autonomy to colleges captured the imagination of the faculty and management and they started remote preparations for the same. A task force was set up to study and plan for it. The final acceptance of autonomy and its implementations was the result of the work of this task force. Their attention was engaged in planning for autonomy, designing programmes for the same, preparing the entire faculty for the change and supervising the implementation of autonomy at the initial stages. As per the responses in an internal survey, 66.67 per cent of the credit for the successful implementation of the programme is attributed to this Task Force. The vision, initiative, support, promptings and encouragement of the management and the governing council of the college account for the remaining 33.33 per cent of the success.

A committed principal with her long years of experience with the college as a student as well as its principal was the moving force behind the entire operation (89%).

According to faculty respondents, the idea of autonomy got concretised out of responses of expert groups, tasks force and staff meetings.

As a result of the self study, Task Force Report, workshops, group discussions, etc., a two faceted document emerged: (1) The Idea of Autonomy and (2) Plan of Action. The entire faculty and supporting staff were involved in giving the final shape to the blue print or plan of action.

6.6. FACULTY PREPARATIONS FOR EFFECTING AUTONOMY TO THE COLLEGE.

It was openly recognised by the college that autonomy demanded radical changes in the teachers' outlook, orientation, skills in teaching, testing and evaluation, etc. They were also to participate increasingly in administrative responsibilities in the departments and in the college, involving committee meetings, documentation, record keeping, etc.

There was a group of committed teachers genuinely interested in autonomy who organised a series of frequent group meetings and discussion sessions to know and study autonomy. The frequency of such meetings were reported by the respondents as "innumerable times, continuous, very often, constant, frequent, always, etc." In the initial stages of the preparation for autonomy such meetings were really frequent and after autonomy was introduced and got established the meetings were occasional according to the needs of the circumstances.

The faculty gained the expertise for autonomy through their self-study programmes, through workshops, seminars, group discussion, etc.. According to the senior faculty members, since the ethos and milieu of the institution was oriented towards innovations and change, it was easy for them to accept autonomy and adopt accordingly.

For the planning and implementation of the programme of Autonomy, Lady Doak College, Madurai, got support in the form of expertise, materials and financial assistance from UGC, Govt of Tamil Nadu, Madurai Kamaraj University, Association of Indian Universities, AIACHE, other nearby Universities, staff members from other Autonomous Colleges, NCERT, Central Electro-chemical Research Institute, Karaikudi, etc. In addition to these, the entire faculty of the college, local industrialists, parents and the alumni, etc., were involved in planning and implementing autonomy programmes in the college. There was also a very limited participation by the local community and other local bodies and industries. The feedbacks from the community helped to frame and modify courses.

In the policy making process, the Principal, Bursar, the faculty, the administration and, to a lesser extent, students were involved.

The whole thinking, policy orientations and planning details were documented and brought out in the form a Report (they call it the "Red Book"), specifying different sections such as General curriculum, Individual Departmental curricula,

Evaluation patterns, Administrative Patterns, College Rules and Regulations, etc.

6.7. COMMUNICATION CHANNELS FOR ADOPTING AND IMPLEMENTING AUTONOMY IN THE COLLEGE AT VARIOUS STAGES.

According to the sampled teachers the communications about the particulars of autonomy came from the principal through the Heads of the Departments. The other modes employed for disseminating the idea of autonomy, according to the order of importance, were group meetings, seminars, workshops, official circulars and printed documents. Communications included on all aspects of autonomy such as curriculum, methods of teaching, evaluation, proposal for budgets, objectives of autonomy, administration under autonomy, etc.

Such communication arrangements were "frequent" or "quite often" in the beginning. Some of the communication methods such as workshops, group meetings, etc., had built-in arrangements for feedbacks. There were arrangements to clarify doubts and answer queries as and when they came from the communicatees. There were occasional expression of feelings such fear, doubt, excitement, etc., as reactions to programmes and plans communicated.

According to the respondents, most of the faculty gave whole-hearted welcome to the idea and proposal of autonomy. Through the various communication channels mentioned above, responsibilities were allotted to teachers and targets were set

for specific groups. These arrangements were evolved by the faculty and were acceptable for them.

6.8. STRUCTURAL CHANGES EFFECTED AS A RESULT OF OBTAINING AUTONOMY.

According to the sampled teachers, as a prelude to detailed planning, an inventory of existing facilities as to the physical resources, faculty, non-teaching personnel, laboratories, etc, were taken. Efforts were made to fill in the deficiencies of material resources by mobilising internal and external resources.

Re-allocation of the resources was also done. 94.44 per cent of the respondent teachers reported that they had a clear budget proposal and allocation at the initial stages as per the detailed plan proposal made by faculty and departments.

Autonomy necessitated the college to revise its administrative and academic structures in the following lines:

6.8.1. Administrative Structures

The following were the administrative structures introduced in this college which has the largest number of such changed structures documented among all the colleges under study.

(1) The Governing Council which is the management body of the college;

(2) The Senatus, consists of the Principal as ex-officio

president, Vice-principal, Heads of the Departments, the Bursar and two representatives elected once in two years from among the permanent members of the teaching staff.

(3) Academic Council, consisting of all the faculty, representatives of the public, college governing council, secondary schools, alumni and the students, principals of other autonomous colleges, and university departments. The council meets twice a year "to discuss and ratify the entire academic programme of the college" and is responsible for maintaining standards and the attainment of academic goals of the college.

(4) Boards of Studies consisting of all faculty members of the Departments and eight external members each, representing the parent university, other autonomous colleges, other universities, research institutes, industries, other institutions and professional colleges. The chairperson is elected from internal, permanent members of the department and holds office by rotation. The Boards meet once a semester to review courses, teaching methods, instructional materials, methods of evaluation, to initiate inter-disciplinary programmes, to recommend external examiners and external members of the Board, etc.

(5) Curriculum Planning and Evaluation Cell (CPEC) with nine faculty members, the Principal, Chairperson of Academic Affairs, Coordinator and Assistant Coordinator of Student Services. Its functions are to design curriculum, scrutiny of the recommendations of the Boards of Studies, issuing guidelines

for summative and formative evaluations, organising of workshops and discussions with experts, etc.

(6) Two Chairpersons of Accademic Affairs, one in charge of Sciences and one for the Humanities. One of them is in charge of Evaluation, i.e., functions as the Controller of Examinations, and the other one is having additional charge to coordinate the activities of Boards of Studies, Academic Council, Curriculum Planning and Evaluation Cell, etc.

(7) College Development Cell with six faculty members and four ex-officio members helped in the general development plans of the college.

(8) Boards of Examiners for each department consisting of internal course teachers and external subject experts to function under the CPEC.

(9) Awards Committee consisting of the Principal, Vice-Principal, Dean of Academic Affairs, five Heads of Departments and two members nominated by the Syndicate of the University. This section supervises the examinations in the college and recommends candidates to the University for the award of degree.

(10) College Committee includes the members of the Senatus and Governing Council of the College. The list recommended by the Awards Committee is to be ratified by this Committee before it is forwarded to the Univeristy.

(11) Nomination Committee makes nominations of the student

representatives to the Academic Council. It also nominates members to the Standing Committee of the College.

(12) Appointments Committee makes recommendations for faculty appointments.

(13) Public Relations and Alumni Development Office.

(14) Coordinator of Extension Services.

As per the reporting of the principal and other faculty members, these committees and bodies helped a lot in further decentralising the administration of the college.

6.8.2. Academic Structures

Academic structures were reorganised more or less with the following features:

(1) Semester System

(2) Pattern of Courses divided into:

(a) integrated basic course or foundation course as part of general education

(b) language courses

(c) major courses

(d) allied courses, and

(e) additional courses

(3) Five days of work in a week with six hours a day

(4) Semester end final examination, grading system with grade points, repeat examination at the end of semester holidays.

(5) For theory papers 50 per cent marks for Continuous Internal Assessment and cent per cent internal Assessment for Laboratory courses and projects.

- (6) Credit system
- (7) Grievance Cell for Evaluation problems
- (8) Rearrangement of faculty workload
- (9) Constitution of Accademic Council, Boards of Studies and Boards of examination.
- (10) Student representation in the Academic Council.
- (11) Introduction of various teaching methods and use of a large number of instructional materials, etc.

6.9. DIFFICULTIES AND HURDLES IN THE WAY OF IMPLEMENTING AUTONOMY

According to the respondents, there were many initial hurdles. The difficulties encountered were mostly external. Some of them are listed below:

- (a) Financial constraints
- (b) Delay in getting the products (graduates from the college) recognised by the public and other institutions;
- (c) Convincing the public about the advantages of autonomy;
- (d) Difficulties for the graduates from the college in getting admission for further studies;
- (e) Lack of materials, text books, etc.;
- (f) Planning for a useful curriculum;
- (g) Planning for an effective and objective evaluation system;
- (h) Preparation of a viable time-table;
- (i) Constraints to increase the number of courses offered, etc.

Efforts were made to communicate these hurdles to the planners

and other authorities. Letters, personal visits and group meetings were the modes adopted to communicate these hurdles.

6.10. MONITORING OF EVALUATION IN THE COLLEGE.

According to the sampled teachers, the autonomy programme in the college was monitored by the Curriculum Planning and Evaluation Cell (CPEC), The chairpersons of Academic Affairs, the Academic Council, and the Principal at the College level and the Awards Committee at the Madhurai Kamaraj University and by the UGC at the national levels.

According to the sampled teachers, evaluations of the programme were conducted by internal and external agencies, some of whom were trained experts while other were not. Questionnaires, scrutiny of records, interviews, discussion sessions, etc., were some of the tools employed for evaluation. In the beginning evaluations were frequent. As time passed on, it was twice a year, once a year and once in two years. Indifference, lack of response, vague replies, etc., were some of the problems encountered in such evaluations. Opinion is divided among the staff members about the adequacy of the data collected by the college for these evaluations. But most teachers feel that they were adequate. As per the data collected, the programme was going on in the college in the expected lines.

Most teachers agreed that while implementing the programme all the dimensions of the programme were taken into account. One faculty member opined that the dimension of inter-personal

relationship was left out from the programme.

The results of the evaluation were communicated at regular intervals to the planners, implementers and the beneficiaries through reports, letters, circulars, etc.

6.11. FACTORS CONTRIBUTORY TO THE SUCCESS OF AUTONOMY IN LADY DOCK COLLEGE.

According to the sampled teachers, certain personal qualities of the planners contributed to the successful implementation of autonomy. They include self-confidence, will power, integrity, commitment, sacrificing mentality, ability to foresee, readiness to change, real interest in educational reforms, hard working nature, willingness to decentralise power and authority, systematic approach, total dedication, democratic spirit, etc.

As per the sampled teachers, the other ingredients that contributed to the success of the innovation were proper planning, response to the felt needs of the society, sagacity in converting dreams to reality, leadership quality to inspire and motivate the faculty to work together, convincing the faculty about the need for the innovation, willingness to listen, to be consulted and to consult, involving the teachers and students in the process, open discussions, etc.

As per the State and University instructions, no additional recruitment of staff on a permanent basis was possible for implementing autonomy. The faculty was willing to shoulder the

additional responsibility. New structures and assignments were made, such as, Academic Council, Boards of Studies, Boards of examiners, Curriulum Planning and evaluation cells, Chairpersons for Academic Affairs - one for Science and another for Humanities, etc.

Re-assignment of personnel was made on the basis of a pre-determined and agreed criteria. Job-description and specification of functions were made. Area of work, interest, commitment, hard working nature, etc., were examined before the reassignments. No transfers or promotions were made. Almost all teachers reported that this arrangement was agreeable to the faculty.

In the case of fresh recruitment of staff, the requirements of autonomy were also looked into. The existing staff members were sent for training and up-dating. Academic as well as administrative training were given to the faculty. Merit, seniority, work habits, etc., were considerations for promotion in the college.

Feedbacks from and about the training programmes were made use of to adapt and up-to-date further training. 50 per cent of the sampled teachers agreed that the training components were designed on the basis of the identified needs.

In February, 1981, the M.K.University Evaluation Committee visited the college and in its report the following positive, developments in the college are mentioned

(1) Internal Assessment in the college is quite satisfactory. The average marks of three internal tests are taken for the final grading of the students. Students are shown their valued answer scripts and after responding to their reactions, they are made to sign them.

(2) Assignment of project work in the fifth and sixth semesters is a welcome development.

(3) Intergrated basic courses in science for the students of humanities and in humanities for the science students are commendable moves.

(4) Practical traianing given to students in real work situation, such as, in the commercial banks for B.Com students, are right steps in higher education.

(5) Bi-lingual teaching in the college is praiseworthy.

(6) It is gratifying to note that the faculty members are highly motivated.

(7) Students from each discipline get representation in the Academic Coucnil. Interaction with the students of the Academic Council proved that the student community is satisfied with the internal assessment system, that there is a sense of participation among the students and that their views and opinions are heard and responded to.

Dr.Mani Jacob's (1985) studies identifies the following points as the functional consequences of autonomy to this college:

(1) 95 per cent of the teachers were of opinion that the autonomous status had helped the growth and development of the

college in many ways. The integrated basic course helped the students to appreciate the inter-relatedness of knowledge. The preparatory course for independent group study and project work helped the students to raise questions, conduct investigations, write reports and face a viva voce. Application oriented courses, field trips and work experience contributed to linking the learning in the classroom with specific life situations.

(2) The new administrative structures involves the staff in participatory decision making. Teachers started increasingly to participate in professional development activities.

(3) New and diversified teaching methods were introduced with the support of newly developed instructional materials.

(4) Evaluation of the students jointly by the course teacher and external examiner and timely conduct of examinations and prompt publishing of results led to the overall efficiency of the system.

(5) Change in the orientation and outlook of the teachers took place. Formerly her role was secondary - teaching a syllabus set by the university and preparing the students for evaluation by others. Under autonomy she prepared her own courses and course material, prescribed learning materials and reference books and she herself evaluated her students. She set her own goals and pursued them within the framework of the established norms and procedures of autonomy. Thus she became a primary and crucial agent in the college process.

(6) Linkage between the college and the local community, service organisations and other colleges increased. The new teaching methods necessitated field visits, project works and work experience outside the campus.

The unfavourable functional consequences were:

(1) The increased work load of the teachers with added administrative responsibilities led to stress and strain on them.

(2) A series of tests and assignments and semester end examinations and the co-curricular activities preoccupied the students to such an extent that they felt that the burden of work was becoming too heavy.

(3) Financial constraints on the college increased.

6.12. CONCLUSION

The far-reaching vision of the managing council of the college, the total dedication and application and uninterrupted service of the principal, the thorough preparation both for the processes of bringing about autonomy to the college and for running the college autonomously with its various academic and administrative programmes, willingness of the faculty to change, adapt and upto-date, flexibility of the programmes, innovative spirit of the personnel involved, constant monitoring and evaluation of the programme, capacity of the top functionaries to win the confidence, support and assistance of the university, UGC, the State Government and other agencies,

linkage with the surroundings, responsiveness to the clientele, etc., were the factors that contributed to the success of this college in the autonomous set up and the intensity and superior dose of these ingredients distinguishes this college from the others.

The experiment of autonomy as such is not a failure in any of the colleges. All the colleges are at varying degrees or stages of success. Some of them have not yet gone to many of the attainable details of autonomous functioning. What was outstanding in Lady Doak college was that this college had undergone the processes of bringing about autonomy and running it autonomously more or less in the lines as envisaged by the planners or visionaries of autonomy. In other words, in this college more of the components of autonomous functioning of a college as one would wish to see were visible. The proper procedures and processes of institutionalising autonomy were more conspicuous in Lady Doak college than in many others.