



UGC/MHRD's Duplicity Exposed! Was the Nigavekar Committee really behind the 2016 Regulations?

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The following response was given to a question asked by Mr. Hussain Dalwai in the Rajya Sabha.

As can be seen from this MHRD Circular, the terms of reference of this Committee never included the formulation of any minimum or maximum regulations for the award of M.Phil. and PhD degrees! Rather, it was tasked with the “Evaluation of PhD NET qualifications for entry of teachers and to accordingly suggest a policy for selections.”

Both the Committee and the delegations it met considered the major issue before the committee to be the fate of PhD holders who received their PhDs before 2009. For example, the All India Federation of University and College Teachers' Organisations wrote to the HRD Minister, Smt. Smriti Irani:

Amendment of Ph.D. Regulations : The minimum standards for award of

M.Phil./Ph.D. dated 11th July, 2009, created an incomprehensible situation by classifying two categories of Ph.D.s, i.e. prior to Regulations of 2009 and post 2009 Regulations. It is unheard of that certain norms for imparting a degree have been given retrospective application. This unresolved issue created a lot of hardship to thousands of Ph.D. degree holders and has led to litigation. The decision of the Hon'ble Supreme Court has left it to the Government of India to take appropriate decision. At present also hundreds of cases in various courts with reference to clauses of MHRD notification dated 31.12.2008., Ph.D. Regulations 2009, UGC Regulations are going on. The issue has been also referred to Prof. Arun Nigavekar Committee. We demand that all controversies on the subject matter be resolved by adding a proviso that "All those who acquired Ph.D. prior to Regulations of 2009 or had enrolled for Ph.D. prior to the date of the Regulations of 2009 are deemed to have met the norms of 2009 Regulations.

Press reports from April 2016 indicate that the Nigavekar Committee did indeed pay heed to teachers' demands.

There is no mention in reports like these that the Nigavekar Committee suggested amending the 2009 Regulations to a 2016 version, which instead of removing barriers to attracting talent to the teaching profession, creates more hurdles for most students wanting to do a PhD.

The minutes of the UGC meeting of 12th April 2016 also clearly indicate that is NOT on the basis also clearly indicate that is NOT on the basis of the Nigavekar Committee Report that the UGC Regulations were amended

(http://www.ugc.ac.in/pdfnews/6954743_514.pdf). The agenda item of modifications to the UGC Regulations on award of degrees is 2.03, and it is only the next (2.04) agenda item that deals with the Nigavekar Committee recommendations.

Indeed, the sequence of items actually leads one to infer that Clause 12.1, mentioned under 2.03 in the minutes, is being added to the already drafted and circulated Regulations, in the light of the recently submitted Nigavekar Committee Report (just one week prior to the meeting).

Unless these minutes have been tampered with (an all too frequent occurrence in the UGC these days), there is reason therefore to doubt the MHRD's assertion that these Regulations were at all recommended by an Expert Committee of any sort or discussed at all with various stakeholders such as Teachers Associations and Vice-Chancellors. No wonder then that these shoddily conceived and drafted Regulations are having the disastrous effect they are on admissions to research seats all over the country.

The JNUTA appeals to Prof. Arun Nigavekar and other members of the committee (such as Prof. Ashwini Mohapatra) to clarify whether their committee had indeed recommended the alterations in the UGC 2009/14 Regulations. If they had not, then unfortunately, Parliament has been grossly and wilfully misled.

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