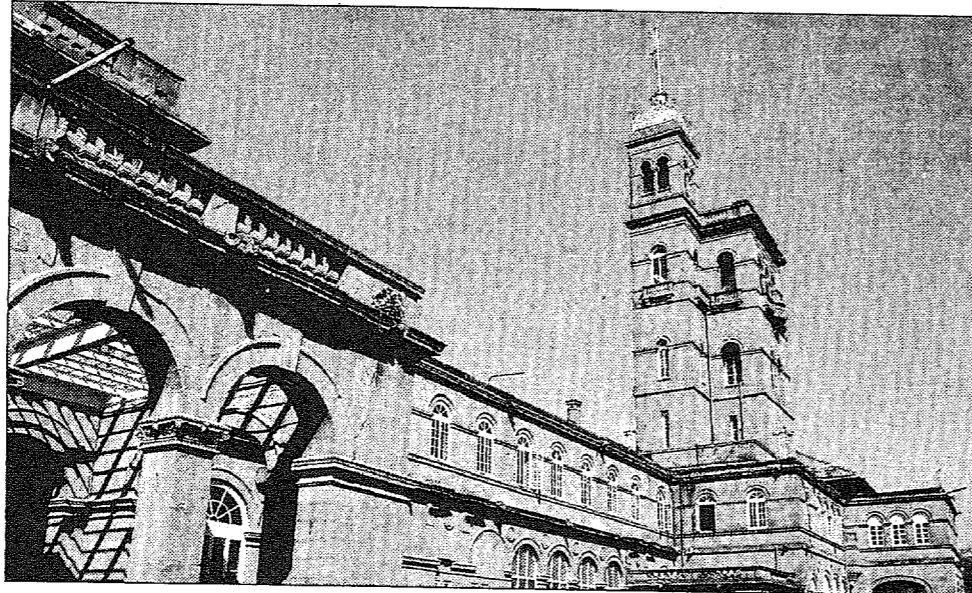


# Move to bifurcate UoP sets off fresh debate

Vice-Chancellor Narendra Jadhav Is Averse To The Idea; Other Education Experts Welcome Proposal

Vishwas Kothari | TNN



According to the proposal, the University of Pune, which has its control spread over Pune, Ahmednagar and Nashik districts, would split into University of Pune (covering Pune city and district) and the University of Pune, Ahmednagar (covering Ahmednagar and Nashik districts)

**Pune:** A fresh debate is brewing in the academic circles here over the state government's latest proposal that envisages bifurcation of the universities of Pune, Mumbai and Nagpur into two entities on the grounds that the existing system had become too unwieldy for efficient functioning.

According to the proposal, the University of Pune (UoP), which has its control spread over Pune, Ahmednagar and Nashik districts, would split into University of Pune (covering Pune city and district) and the University of Pune, Ahmednagar (covering Ahmednagar and Nashik districts).

As of now, the UoP has 472 colleges affiliated to it and over 250 recognised institutions, totally accounting for more than 5 lakh students in all the three districts.

Post-bifurcation, nearly 200 affiliated colleges and 90 recognised institutions, located in Ahmednagar and Nashik districts, would fall under the newly carved out smaller entity, impacting close to 2 lakh students from these districts.

There are issues of students from Ahmednagar and Nashik losing the advantage that accrues from the UoP's brand equity. However, the proposed split is expected to facilitate better administrative, financial and academic handling of matters under the new smaller entities.

The question being asked is whether splitting larger universities is the only viable solution? The National Knowledge Commission (NKC) has said that unwieldy universities in order to be efficient and sensitive to the needs of the stakeholders, ought to be trimmed into smaller entities.

However, speaking to TOI on Thursday, UoP vice-chancellor Narendra Jadhav said,

"I don't think size is a constraint. It can, in fact, be a strength if nursed through apt change of technology for handling the wide network of institutions." He said, the UoP had set out to achieve this through the triple connectivity project that envisages an online network of the affiliated colleges, recognised institutions, post-graduate departments and the UoP administration.

He pointed out that things haven't worked out the way they are being sought through the proposed split at the existing smaller universities in the state. For instance, the Solapur University, he said. "What we are working at is, an apt strengthening of the UoP sub-centres at Ahmednagar and Nashik by procuring 100 to 150

acre land and building infrastructure that can function as independent university campuses," he said.

Jadhav ruled out the prospect of the split taking effect from the forthcoming academic year. "The proposal is at a nascent stage and yet to come out of the files for discussion at the level of the vice-chancellors (V-Cs). We (the UoP) have neither made any suggestion to the government in this regard nor the latter has consulted us so far on this matter," he said.

Jadhav's predecessor and now advisor to the NKC, Ashok Kolaskar, said the move was right but wondered how it would impact Ahmednagar and Nashik if the state fails to adequately support the new entity.

The government will have to provide an enabling set up to enable the new entity get into the academic aspects without wasting much time on issues of acquiring land and constructing new buildings. This had happened in the case of the UoP as the then governor had the foresight of extending a ready-to-run campus facility. A somewhat similar move would benefit the new smaller entity, Kolaskar said.

Kolaskar said, the newly carved entity would also be required to develop its own brand equity by focusing on newer programmes instead of plain replication of the existing UoP model. "They will have to bring in more culture of research rather than remaining an exam-taking body," he

said. Also, the focus will have to be on catering to the strength of the respective areas. "The government should ask an expert panel to take the local viewpoint in establishing the new entity," he said.

Former University Grants Commission chairman Arun Nigavekar said that the existing higher education system had indeed become unwieldy and was impacting the governance as well as management of universities. "Creation of smaller entities empowered to give degrees and take administrative, financial and academic decisions is a definite requirement," Nigavekar said, adding that the ministry of human resource and development and the state education ministers had endorsed the UGC's suggestion in the past that autonomous colleges and the colleges with potential for excellence be granted an 'empowered status'. "This was to create mini-universities within the existing affiliating structure, i.e. the state university," he said. Somehow, the proposal did not come through.

Nigavekar said, splitting larger university was good but the logical step would be to empower colleges without disturbing the existing affiliating structure.

Gajanan Ekbote, member, UoP management faculty, said the split would ensure better control, regulation and monitoring of colleges and recognised institutions besides, enabling administrative, academic and exam reforms.

Sarjerao Nimse, UoP management council member and principal of New Arts Science and Commerce College, Ahmednagar, said, the move would be justified only when the government backs it up with financial and academic support. "It will present us the opportunity to create a brand equity of our own," he said.

Times of India

30/5/08

सन इमेज मेकर्स