
been brought on record for declaring the election result of the respondent i.e. the successful candidate Shri Hamid Hussain, to be invalid or void.

(29) There is no merit in the petition and the same is dismissed with costs which are assessed at Rs. 5000.00.

(30) Certified copy of this judgment be sent to the concerned quarters.

S.C.K.

Before N.K. Sodhi & R. C. Kathuria, JJ

MITHILESH KUMAR & OTHERS—*Petitioners*

versus

STATE OF PUNJAB & OTHERS—*Respondents*

C.W.P. No. 6496 of 2001

29th May, 2001

Constitution of India, 1950—Art. 226—Admission to Technical Education in Engineering & Technology—Fee structure for students admitted to degree programme—Hike in—Students informed of fee structure mentioned in brochure at the time of admission—Notice issued to students alongwith their roll number slips informing the revised fee/fund structures adopted by the Govt. & approved by the Board—Public notice regarding revised fee structure in the press also issued—Detailed fee communicated at the time of counselling—Hike in fee cannot be construed as exorbitant or irrational—Action of respondents is just and principle of promissory estoppel not applicable against the respondents.

Held, that one cannot ignore that hike in fee structure absolutely has no co-relation with regard to the criterion for admission to the Degree Program laid down in the Brochure. The criterion for admission to the Degree Program laid down in the Brochure was not sought to be changed. It is not a case where the petitioners were taken by surprise. Rather, at the first available opportunity and at the time when they received the roll numbers for appearing in the Entrance Test, they were informed by the respondents that the fee/fund structure

commencing from the sessions 1999-2000 would be revised. Therefore, the details of the fee communicated to the petitioners were in consonance with the stand of the respondents. The respondents were not debarred claiming hiked fee from the petitioners and the principle of promissory estoppel will not be applicable against the respondents. The fee hike had been notified by the Director of Technical Education and Industrial Training, Punjab. Therefore, it cannot be said that the decision to hike the fee structure for admission to the Degree Program commencing with the Session 1999-2000 is devoid of the ground realities. The fee hike, by no stretch of imagination, can be construed as exorbitant or irrational. Rather, the action of the respondent appears to be just and in tune to the facilities to be provided to the students in the Institution.

(Paras 11, 12 & 13)

J.S. Wasu, Senior Advocate, with A.B. Singh Wasu, for the
Petitioners.

JUDGMENT

R.C. Kathuria, J

(1) Challenge in this petition is to the Notification dated 9th September, 1999, Annexure 'P-4' with the writ petition, whereby fee structure for the students admitted to the Degree Programme (1999 Batch) in the Sant Longowal Institute of Engineering and Technology, (hereinafter referred to as 'the SLIET'), has been revised.

(2) The SLIET has been providing technical education in Engineering and Technology. For the Courses run by it, Certificates, Diplomas and Degrees are awarded. The Degree Program was introduced in this Institute in the academic year 1993-94. The duration of the Degree Program is of three years. There are two categories of seats for admissions to the Degree Program, namely Vertical Entry Seats and Direct Entry Seats. Vertical Entry Seats are only for the SLIET students and Direct Entry Seats are for the SLIET students as well as outside candidates. Some of the petitioners are direct entrants to the Degree Program while others have taken admission under the category of Vertical Entry Seats.

(3) The fee structure for admissions to Certificates, Diplomas and Degree Program was detailed in the Information Brochure for SLIET Entrance Test-1999 (hereinafter referred to as 'the brochure') which was issued of 25th February, 1999. As per schedule, the total fee chargeable from the students seeking admission to the Degree Program in the SLIET was Rs. 7512.00. The petitioners applied for admission to the SLIET in the Degree Program. They received roll number slips along with notice (Annexure 'P-2') sent by the Chairman of the SLIET informing them that the fee/fund structure, as mentioned in the Brochure, had revised and the revised fee/fund structure, as adopted by the Government of Punjab and duly approved by the Board of Governors of the SLIET would be operative from the Session 1999-2000. Thereafter, another public notice (Annexure 'P-3') was published in the 'Tribune' on 17th August, 1999, informing the general public that the fee structure/other charges in the Degree and Diploma level Institution affiliated to the Punjab Technical University had been revised and made applicable only to the students to be admitted to the Ist year in Session 1999-2000 and onwards. It was also specified that the students admitted in the earlier sessions would be governed by the old fee structure and would continue to pay fee at the old rates for the remaining period of their Course. Upto this stage, according to the petitoners, no information was supplied to them with regard to the exact amount of increase of fee chargeable/payable by them. Rather, they were informed that whenever decision in this regard was taken, the same would be communication to them.

(4) The petitioners appeared in the Entrance Test held on 7th July, 1999. At the time of counselling for admission to the Degree Program in the SLIET, the information conveyed to them was that they would be required to pay the total fee of Rs. 25,235.00 including refundable amount of Rs. 3,000.00 for admission to the Ist Year Degree Program. Aggrieved by this action of the respondents, the petitioners have filed the present writ petition under Article 226 of the Constitution of India.

(5) We have heard learned counsel for the petitioners and have gone through the record of the writ petition.

(6) The pre-dominant grievance of the learned counsel for the petitioners is that after publication of the fee structure in the Brochure, the authorities of the SLIET could not unilaterally enhance the fee,

as has been done in this case. Further, according to him, a breach of promise has been committed by the respondents in this regard and for that reason the principle of promissory estoppel would be applicable against them. Additionally, it was urged by him that the action of the respondents in issuing the public notice dated 17th August, 1999 (Annexure 'P-3') conveying the revised fee structure for the Degree Program is not only arbitrary but discriminatory as well as there is no rationale in charging a fee of Rs. 7512.00 from the IInd and IIIrd year students of the Degree program and a fee of Rs. 25,235.00 from the petitioners, who are students of Ist Year.

(7) In order to appreciate the submission made, notice has to be taken of the fee structure mentioned in the Brochure issued on 25th February, 1999. the same is as under :—

FEE SCHEDULE FOR ACADEMIC YEAR 1999-2000

	Certificate	Diploma Degree	Seme.
PAYABLE AT THE TIME OF ADMISSION.			
A. Refundable Fees :			
1. Caution money			
(a) Library	xx	xx	500
(b) Laboratories	xx	xx	500
(c) Hostel	xx	xx	400
2. Hostel Mess Advance	xx	xx	1000
			2400
B. Non-Refundable Fees :			
1. Admission	xx	xx	100
2. Registration Fee	xx	xx	200
3. Identity Cards.	xx	xx	15

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4.	Swimming Pool	xx	xx	70
5.	Transport	xx	xx	110
6.	Students Welfare and Poor students funds.	xx	xx	1200
7.	Medical Fee	xx	xx	60
8.	Training & Placement	xx	xx	75
9.	Magazine Fee	xx	xx	60
10.	Book Bank	xx	xx	200
11.	P.T.U. Charges for Degree Students only.	xx	xx	525
				<u>2615</u>

C. Other Fees :

(To be paid on the
commencement of each
Trimester/Semester)

1.	Tuition Fee	xx	xx	1500
2.	Sports & Other Extra Curricular activities	xx	xx	90
3.	Grade Card	xx	xx	15
4.	Examination Fee	xx	xx	100 (for internal Exams only)
5.	Hostel Seat Rent	xx	xx	80
6.	Hostel Estt. Charges	xx	xx	150
7.	Common Room Charges	xx	xx	100

8.	Electricity Charges	xx	xx	450
9.	Water Charges.	xx	xx	12
				2497
	Total Admission Fee A + B + C +	xx		7512"

The fee structure after revision, detailed in the Notification dated 9th September, 1999 (Annexure 'P-4') issued by the SLIET, is reproduced below for facility of reference :—

“FEE STRUCTURE (DEGREE) — 1999 BATCH.

PAYABLE AT THE TIME OF ADMISSION.		<u>STUDENTS ACTIVITY RELATED FUND.</u>	
NON-REFUNDABLE FEE.		<u>STUDENTS ACTIVITY RELATED FUND.</u>	
Instt. Development fee	3000.00	CLUB ADMISSION FEE INSTT. MEMBERSHIP FEE	50.00 30.00
Admission fee	500.00	STUDENT AID FUND	25.00
Registration fee	200.00	YOUTH WELFARE	25.00
Identity Card	50.00	EDUCATIONAL TOUR	100.00
Swimming Pool fee	160.00	STATIONERY/DRAWING	
Transport fee	300.00	BOARD/BLUE PRINT FEE	100.00
Student Welfare Fund	1200.00	FEE LIBRARY BOOK REPLACEMENT	50.00
Medical Fee	300.00	A/C AID	200.00
Training and Placement	75.00	SPORTS AND RECREATION CLUB FEE	50.00 300.00
Diary Charges	600.00	STUDENTS AMENITIES	500.00

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Magazine Charges	SOUVENIR	300.00
Book Bank	200.00	
Library fee	300.00	
Students activity related funds	1730.00	
Alumni Association and house charges	150.00	
Syllabus charges for the entire course	120.00	
P.T.U. Registration fee	525.00	
TOTAL	9410.00	

**TO BE PAID ON COMMENCMENT
OF EACH SEMESTER OTHER FEE
(PER SEMESTER).**

Computer	
Development Fund.	1000.00
Tuition fee.	10000.00
Sport fee.	300.00
Grade Card.	15.00
Examination fees (Periodical Test fee.)	100.00
Hostel Seat Rent & Common Room Charges.	600.00
Electricity & Water Charges.	460.00
Hostel Estt. Charges.	350.00
Total Admission fee.	12825.00."

(8) Coming to the issues raised, the promissory estoppel, as a doctrine of good conscience to avoid injustice, can be invoked where the facts of the case warrant. Essentially, the stand of the petitioners has to be tested on the pre-dominant requirements; (i) that there was a representation of promise in regard to something to be done in future; (ii) that representation or promise was intended to affect the legal relations of the parties and to be acted upon accordingly; and (iii) that it is one on which the other side has in fact acted to its prejudice. (*see Air Corporation Employees. Union and others v. G.B. Bhirade and others*(1))

(9) Undisputably, the petitioners, at the time when they applied for admission to the Degree Program, had taken into account the fee structure mentioned in the Brochure. It has also been admitted by the petitioners that when they received their roll numbers for appearing in the Entrance Test. They had also received a notice (Annexure p-2) which was sent by the Chairman of the SLIET informing them that the fee/fund structure which was published in the Brochure, had been revised and the revised fee/fund structure as adopted by the Government of Punjab and duly approved by the Board of Governors of the SLIET, would be applicable from the Session 1999-2000. It was mentioned in this notice that detailed fee/fund structure would be communicated to the candidates at the time of counselling. At the time of counselling, the petitioners were informed that they would be required to pay the total they would be required to pay the total fee of Rs. 25, 235/- for the Session 1999-2000. Thereafter, a public notice was issued in the 'Tribune' on 17th August, 1999, copy of which is Annexure p-3 with the writ petition. It reads as under :-

"It is notified for the information of the general public that the fee structure/other charges in the degree and diploma level institutions affiliated to the Punjab Technical University/PBSTE has been revised by the Government and is applicable to only students admitted to 1st Year in 1999-2000 Session and onwards.

The students admitted in earlier sessions are governed by the old fee structure and would continue to pay the old rates before revision for their remaining period of Course.

(1) AIR 1971 Bombay 288

In case any institution demands/ charges fee any other charges under the revised fee structure from any old student admitted in earlier session (s), it tantamount to mal-practice on the part of the Institution and may be brought to the notice of the Department of Technical Education and Industrial Training, Punjab, Punjab Technical University, Jalandhar, PBSTE or Director, Technical Education and Industrial Training, for appropriate action.”

(10) It was contended by the learned counsel representing the petitioners that in the Notification (Annexure p-3) no details of the fee structure were given and it was only on 9th September, 1999,— *vide* Notification Annexure p-4 that the petitioners were furnished with the details of the fee structure in respect of the Non-refundable Fee and Students Activity Related Fund after the commencement of the Degree Program and for that reason the respondents were not entitled to recover the enhanced fee from the petitioners for the Session 1999-2000.

(11) One cannot ignore that hike in fee structure absolutely has no co-relation with regard to the criterion for admission to the Degree Program laid-down in the Brochure. In this case the criterion for admission to the Degree Program laid-down in the Brochure was not sought to be changed. It is not a case where the petitioners were taken by surprise. Rather, at the first available opportunity and at the time when they received the roll numbers for appearing in the Entrance Test, they were informed by the respondents that the fee/fund structure commencing from the Session 1999-2000 would be revised. Therefore, the details of the fee communicated to the petitioners were in consonance with the stand of the respondents. The respondents were not debarred from claiming hiked fee from the petitioners and the principle of promissory estoppel will not be applicable against the respondents under the circumstances of this case.

(12) It is well-settled that the fixation of fee for the Course does not fall within the domain of the Court. Primarily, it is the function of the All India Council for Technical Education, State Government and affiliating Universities. They have to evolve a proper fee structure for the Course keeping in view the interest of the students, rising costs of essential items and administrative expenses involved

in running the institutions. The effort of the State should be that citizens should have equal opportunity to receive education in the Institutions run by the State Government and the fee structure has to be rationalised keeping that object in view. In the present case, the fee hike had been notified by the Director of Technical Education and Industrial Training, Punjab. Therefore, it cannot be said that the decision to hike the fee structure for admission to the Degree Program commencing with the Session 1999-2000 is devoid of the ground realities.

(13) Apart from that, one cannot ignore that the petitioners, in order to highlight their claim in the petition, have taken into account Refundable Fees, Non-refundable Fees and fees to be paid at the commencement of each Trimester and Semester for arriving at the figure of Rs. 7512/- which was payable by the students at the time of admission prior to the present revision in the fee structure. In the Notification (Annexure p-4), it is clearly mentioned that at the commencement of each Semester, the student is required to pay total admission fee of Rs. 12825/-. Judging the present fee structure on the basis of disparity with earlier fee structure would not be justified because as and when fee structure is revised, there is bound to be discernible disparity. Therefore, the fee hike in the present case, by no stretch of imagination, can be construed as exorbitant or irrational, as projected from the side of the petitioners. Rather, the action of the respondent appears to be just and in tune to the facilities to be provided to the students in the Institution. While arriving at this conclusion, one has to keep in mind that the Institution has to bear additional expenses on account of pay hike, rising costs in all respects and other administrative expenses required to be incurred as per exigencies arising during the period of the Course. In the given circumstances, we find no merit in this writ petition.

(14) For the aforesaid reasons, the petition fails and the same is dismissed.

R.N.R.