

Need of hour: Improving higher education

This was perhaps the first time in India's election history that higher education reform was one of the key issues discussed by our prime ministerial candidates.

The new govt. at centre has now completed its first year and settled down.

Thus, it is the right time to raise the issue about higher education reforms. Otherwise a country of sabaso karor will

not have any institute among the 100 best in world, by 2022, the year that gets most referred for any futuristic goal these days.

There has been effort to push the budget for higher education and research from the time of Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee's govt. Still Indian academics and cultural departments lag behind top international universities and cultural departments. Where we lose, is perhaps



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not in the brain drain, but in killing the brain in its budding stage.

Many today believe that despite salaries of faculty and research staff in higher education in the country being quite competitive, compared with global standards, little has been done to address better selection of faculty, and make selection and appointments corruption-free and rid

of bias related to institution, region or language.

Here are my thoughts on this root issue that prevents our institutions of higher education from achieving global ranks. It's an established norm that most American universities do not employ their own alumni for first 10 years after they pass out (leaving aside some very exceptional cases or highly specialised subject where not many

staff are there). This is because they look for horizontal development of the subject and research. Such policy takes care of biased recruiting of own students regardless of merit.

Higher education and research hiring is competitive in Europe, and it is not only that the selection board has a say, but the candidates also bargain for facilities that makes the university remain updated with the research environment. This is possible, as the selection takes place only after the candidate justifies how the university benefits by hiring him/her.

It's quite unlike what takes place in most of our institutes, where selection takes place with a few customised questions of the selection panel, who prepare questions according to their prior intention of accepting or rejecting the candidate, and by going through his/her CV. Not many universities in India even ask for a justification letter and presentation of the same (with a time bound appointment offer to

justify the claim) from the candidate, and evaluate the same in a brainstorming session of experts and candidates. In case of international universities, however, this is the most important document on which candidate selection is based.

All autonomous institutes should have academicians of highest repute as their heads and not any person with mediocre standing, who from insecurity, is eager to ensure that no competitive person gets an appointment in the institute.

Theoretically, we need to recruit only those in universities and teaching-cum-research institutes who can teach and guide the students to a level from where they can do their independent research. May be a person aspiring to be university teacher should first take a few classes of post-graduate students. A good candidate should try his level best to be a good teacher. Otherwise, he'll only contribute in research and work for personal growth, but would help little in creating the future generation.