

Editorial

NEP 2020: Conceptualizing and Rejuvenating Academic Research in Higher Education

National Education Policy 2020 *envisages* a comprehensive restructuring of Indian educational system with a vision of transforming India into a knowledge-based economy. It rightly admitted the fact that knowledge creation and a robust research ecosystem are most critical in growing and sustaining a large and vibrant economy, uplifting society, and continuously inspiring a nation to achieve even greater heights. In fact, academic research is an integral part of the higher education system in most knowledge societies. The rapid global changes in the field of environment, climate change, population dynamics, biotechnology, digital marketplace, machine learning and artificial intelligence also justifies the need of an effective and sustainable academic research environment in higher educational institutions. However, despite this critical importance of academic research, present investment of India in the field of research is only 0.69% of GDP as compared to 2.8% in USA, 4.3% in Israel and 4.2% in South Korea.

To provide a research ecosystem and promote quality academic research in higher educational institutions, NEP 2020 envisions the establishment of a National Research Foundation (NRF). The Foundation will be provided with an annual grant of Rs 20,000 crore (0.1% of GDP). NRF is the outcome of realisation that quality research and innovations are key to the economic growth of the nation. It aims at providing the required impetus to grow the R&D agenda by way of building a research ecosystem comprising the government, universities, research institutes and industry. The collaboration between academia and industry envisioned by the NEP calls for a patent

policy structure at the HEI's level to facilitate more patent applications. Such a policy will safeguard interests of all the entities involved, provide for a research environment, and ensure compliance with the national laws and regulations. A larger number of patents with commercial benefits will serve as incentives for continuous and sustained efforts in research. According to the NEP, "the NRF will work towards seeding, funding, coordinating, and monitoring research and innovation initiatives." It will also encourage research through merit-based peer evaluation of research projects along with incentives like awards for outstanding work. In particular, the NRF will provide a reliable base of merit-based but equitable peer-reviewed research funding, helping to develop a culture of research in the country through suitable incentives for and recognition of outstanding research, and by undertaking major initiatives to seed and grow research at State Universities and other public institutions where research capability is currently limited. The NRF will competitively fund research in all disciplines. Successful research will be recognized, and where relevant, implemented through close linkages with governmental agencies as well as with industry and private/philanthropic organizations. Thus NEP 2020 aims at mitigating the gap between private, state and central universities by equal and uniform opportunities for research ecosystem in the whole country through National Research Foundation.

The thrust of the NEP-2020 is to transform cross-disciplinary research in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) of India by creating knowledge hubs and a sustainable research eco-

system. It emphasises a multidisciplinary approach in education and the need to nurture a curious and creative mind with a view to develop analytical and critical thinking abilities at an early age. These are the skills essential for identifying the problems and chalking out its best research plan so that it led to the required and relevant solutions of the same. This approach will, therefore, be instrumental in giving a meaningful thrust to research and innovation serving as yet another significant harbinger in the long-term and sustainable research endeavour for India. With this aim it recommends continuing with a two-year Master's programme, with the se-

cond year devoted totally to research and a four-year bachelor's programme with research (who will be eligible for a one-year master's programme and PhD).

It is high time for India to develop and nurture a robust research ecosystem for higher education that is in tune with societal needs and capable of responding to current and future challenges. NEP 2020 can be considered to be the greatest opportunity for transforming India into a powerful and enlightened knowledge society and a global leader in the field of research and innovation.

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