

Think Indian, Go Global

No country controls the marketplace of ideas. For high-quality research, there's no alternative to collaboration beyond boundaries.



As a young nation, India will have the largest workforce by 2030. It is mandatory to achieve 100 per cent literacy for that. More than 62 per cent of the country's population is in the 15-59 age group whereas 54 per cent is under 25 years of age. If we have to reap dividends of the youth power in proportion to their numbers, we have to build the future of our children through holistic education.

Only youth of our nation can realise the Swachh Bharat, Swasth Bharat, Sashakt Bharat, Ek Bharat, Shreshth Bharat (Clean India, Healthy India, Strong India, One India, Excellent India) vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. In a rapidly changing global environment, there are so many opportunities today that we can provide leadership to the whole world just by making use of our potential. We have the largest education system comprising 1,000 universities, 45,000 degree colleges, 16 lakh schools and 33 crore students. We possess the capability of changing the course of world history with our manpower. I think that quality- and innovation-based education is the foundation for making India an economic superpower and a global guru.

We are committed to finding a holistic solution to the challenges in the field of education by expanding its reach, improving teaching and learning techniques, attaining global standards in research, and linking it with employment and entrepreneurial sectors. It is heartening to know that brainstorming on how to attain the excellence goal as per global standards is already on at various levels.

The benefits of interlinking education and research are indisputable. If we talk about knowledge, science and technology, this collaboration is the easiest and most effective medium to achieve excellence. The most

One has to face challenges in a multidisciplinary research project because of the different perspectives of various specialties. Absence of dialogue makes it more complex. A research-linked complexity may pose a difficult challenge to a multi-institutional research. A collaborative research gives rise to several moral issues, but all the hurdles can be removed if only the leadership is competent, mature and positive. Regardless of the reasons, it is better to sort them out before any controversy arises. The beauty lies in attaining the goals by taking everybody along.

The global rating agencies have a particular outlook when it comes to data collection through perception-based independent surveys. However, there has been little participation of Indian academics in such surveys. It has largely been responsible for the perceived decline in the average performance of the country's institutions. It is, therefore, necessary for the global ranking agencies to ensure participation of Indian academicians and researchers. It can help reach a new level of research at the international level.

It is not as though our performance has been contrary to our expectations. We have performed well at times. Indian institutions have had diversity because of their specialisations. While institutions such as the IITs have been making it to the global list of top 100 institutes, there are other institutions that have made their presence felt by securing a special place on other ranking lists such as the Times Higher Education, Emerging Economies University Ranking and QS Top 50.

In a competitive global environment, there is need to integrate basic research at Indian universities. We need to develop a culture for quality research, and boost the efforts to keep the industries and innovations linked to various research activities so as to ensure an easy flow of funds and resources through partnerships.



Apart from formulating policies for reforms in research culture, the need of the hour is to give a priority to investment. The Indian institutions need to redesign higher education by equipping students with requisite skills in keeping with the rising global economic demands. We have to upgrade the skills and knowledge of Indian students as per the requirements of the global market.

There is also a need for globalisation of our institutions by enrolling foreign students and hiring faculty from all over the world. In collaboration with top international institutions, a special campaign to promote industries with innovations and entrepreneurship can also help us tackle the challenge of unemployment. As of now, there is need for greater coordination between teaching and research through collaborations between Indian and foreign institutions.

The graduation syllabus and duration of the course between two countries may be different, but we are heading towards mutual recognition of such courses with more and more countries. The low-cost and high-quality Indian education is immensely attractive. Therefore, there is immense scope for the South-South cooperation.

The universities also need to enter into MoUs, especially with prestigious international institutions. But their collaborations should not be restricted to teaching and learning. There is a need for focusing on overall development and understanding best practices. At times, we feel we are better than others, but this develops in us a tendency to keep others out of important work. Some people also tend to feel threatened with collaborations. They feel they will be deprived of their due if they work in sync with others. But it has never been true. I have always believed that if somebody is not willing to cooperate, it only reflects his insecurities. If an educational institute is successful, it indicates the victory of the entire system, and also that of the country. It may be possible that at many places, everybody wants to be the star, but such a parochial mindset turns out to be an impediment for the growth of research culture. Cooperation is not about any individual; on the contrary, it ensures overall development.

In my opinion, there are two-pronged benefits for expanding the scope of research through strategic partnerships between the top universities of India and the world. It can facilitate mutual visits of talented research students and post-doctoral fellows from each other's countries.

I am happy that IIT-Delhi has signed an MoU with five laboratories of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research. Under this agreement, IIT-Delhi is working on a project to boost collaborative research, mutual exchange of ideas and give a fillip to high-quality research, under which 60 multi-disciplinary projects are to be taken up. Six months ago, a new initiative was announced in the form of STRIDE (Scheme for Trans-disciplinary Research for India's Developing Economy), which will strengthen

research culture and novel innovations, apart from inspiring teachers and students to contribute towards India's developing economy.

It is a matter of satisfaction for me that we are introducing a new education policy after 33 years, following the longest deliberations in the world, which will not only boost industrialisation but also make cross-border accreditation process for educational programmes easier and more practical. It will facilitate seamless mobility of students and faculty for research at the global level.

Uninterrupted team work is not only important for increasing the output, but also for happiness of the personnel. Today, the world is facing some of the gravest challenges such as energy and food scarcity, climate change, depletion of resources and threat to ecosystems. There is no doubt that today's able leadership considers cooperation to be the winning formula. When connectivity is increasing and the world is shrinking in a rapidly changing environment, team work is being looked upon as the key to organisational success. Today's workforce believes in cooperation more than ever before. Various studies have proven that wherever the universities have collaborated, it has yielded positive results.

It is necessary for all of us to think in different ways to take research to the next level. We have to work together for setting the goals and chalking out the strategy. We have to also keep in mind that we should keep on thinking of the ideas and not the outcomes. We should remain connected with each other through all mediums for dialogue and stay committed all the time. No participation is possible without commitment. The biggest prize of cooperation is that we do not know what will be the ultimate result. Creativity underpinned by innovations can help attain the biggest of goals.

A cursory look at the world scenario makes it clear that academic research is becoming more global today, whether it is access to special equipment, development of ideas or discovery of new sources for funds. It is helping better work. We know that ideas cannot be confined to geographical boundaries. No country can control the market of ideas. Research or any campaign of the science should be seen as a cooperative bid beyond boundaries. It is only then that the concept of global welfare can become true.

By Ramesh Pokhriyal, Union HRD minister