

## Why a Ph D is not enough

In response to the letter by Mahanty<sup>1</sup>, I agree that a Ph D can never always lead to lucrative job opportunities. There are a number of reasons for this. Although Ph D is the highest degree that can be awarded by any university, Indian doctorates and scholars have been often found to display lacunae. The most common are the lack of English writing and communication skills as well as analytical skills. The pre-Ph D course work offered in many Indian universities usually revolves around topics which are either irrelevant to a scholar's field or have no future practical implications. Hence, it would be preferable if the drawbacks of the earlier generation of research scholars are identified and initiatives taken to train the next generation of scholars during the pre-Ph D period. It is, in fact, due to such loop-holes that many of the doctorates are far from being employable.

The prevailing conventional rules and norms also need to be broken to improve the quality of scholars, thus making them more suitable for employment. Most of the research work carried out in Indian universities follows the footsteps of earlier Western workers. For every methodology applied, an established reference

needs to be cited, which is usually from Western workers. Hence, a trend of following the West has developed. Many supervisors and scholars usually replicate the work which has already been done in the West. The idea of developing original methodologies is never perceived and usually never accepted. When research scholars present their work, experts and examiners always enquire about the cited references for methodologies adopted. A methodology is usually deemed invalid if it lacks proper citation during formal presentations. The concept of inception of a new, original methodology is not acceptable. Hence, scholars are confined to the conventional limits of research that have existed since long time. In other words, exploration of innovation is forbidden and this has led to academic underdevelopment and unsuitability for employment.

Many university scholars pursue their research under stressful conditions<sup>2</sup>. Under such situations, the primary objective is always to somehow finish the tentative work under the stipulated time. There is greater emphasis on completion of work rather than learning from it. A number of scholarships are awarded to research scholars, but these are never

sanctioned on time. Thus, researchers are forced to take care of their expenses from their own resources. Moreover, the formalities that need to be fulfilled in such cases are elaborate and 'unfriendly', and scholars often feel demoralized and discouraged.

Therefore, the primary objective of a Ph D is never fulfilled and it remains as a mere cliché in most cases. The efficiency that a scholar is supposed to achieve after the completion of a Ph D is thus never realized and this in turn makes Indian scholars unsuitable for employment.

It is high time we understand that the conventional trends must be broken and innovative ones must be established to make scholars suitable for employment.

1. Mahanty, A., *Curr. Sci.*, 2015, **108**(9), 1577.
2. Dutta, H., *Curr. Sci.*, 2012, **102**(7), 956.

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## Teaching in higher education institutions – policy rethink is necessary

Raman<sup>1</sup> has raised a very pertinent issue on the dire needs of teachers in Indian institutions. He is entirely correct. In the last twenty five years or so, teaching has evolved from passion to profession. Today we see more teacher-managers rather than teachers in true sense of the term. Earlier, a teacher used to create a new generation forgetting completely about himself/herself. The educated generation that used to be created was the best reward of the teacher and his/her teaching. Today the focus has changed completely to 'me and myself and my research group' and in this transformation the salesman character of a teacher has emerged like never before. In Indian universities today, teaching is secondary.

There is practically no credit given to teachers for dissemination of knowledge in the classroom. All credit goes to publications, howsoever silly or plagiarized they may be. Every now and then, electronic mails are received giving information on launch of new journals. I fail to understand how so many new ideas are produced so fast so that papers are written and published one after the other. A question that comes to my mind is what percentage of such papers contains new and useful information. If not, why are they written and published at all? Is it not a kind of satisfaction of one's own ego? Do such publications do any good other than enhancing the Academic Performance Indicators (API) scores of the

teachers concerned which in turn increase the chance of promotion through career advancement of those teachers? The whole process is intriguing and baffling.

Time has come to impress upon the teachers and also the bodies making Policies on Higher Education that it is not the number of papers but the contents therein that matter. If a teacher writes two or three good papers in reputed journals and pours his/her heart out to teach in the classroom year after year, he/she does a lot good and contributes a great deal towards teaching and creating scholarship in students. Sadly, Indian institutions today do not have many such teachers who are really committed and

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are men of integrity. Those who want to teach well are under the API pressure to improve upon their CVs and slowly but surely the classrooms become worst sufferers. The mad rush for substandard research will soon make true, committed and dedicated teachers a species of the bygone era and the art of teaching will be 'art' in true sense of the term housed in museums.

Any human endeavour including sound teaching and good research requires critical infrastructure, critical

resource, critical manpower and above all, critical idea. If any of these necessary components is less available then its corresponding critical value, aberration is bound to set in. Thus, lack of resources will lead teachers to do meaningless research, although the same will be useful for their career advancement. Similarly, lack of ideas will pave the ground for plagiarizing in larger and larger numbers. All these ills are already abundantly available in the Indian Higher Education arena and those at the helm are aware of

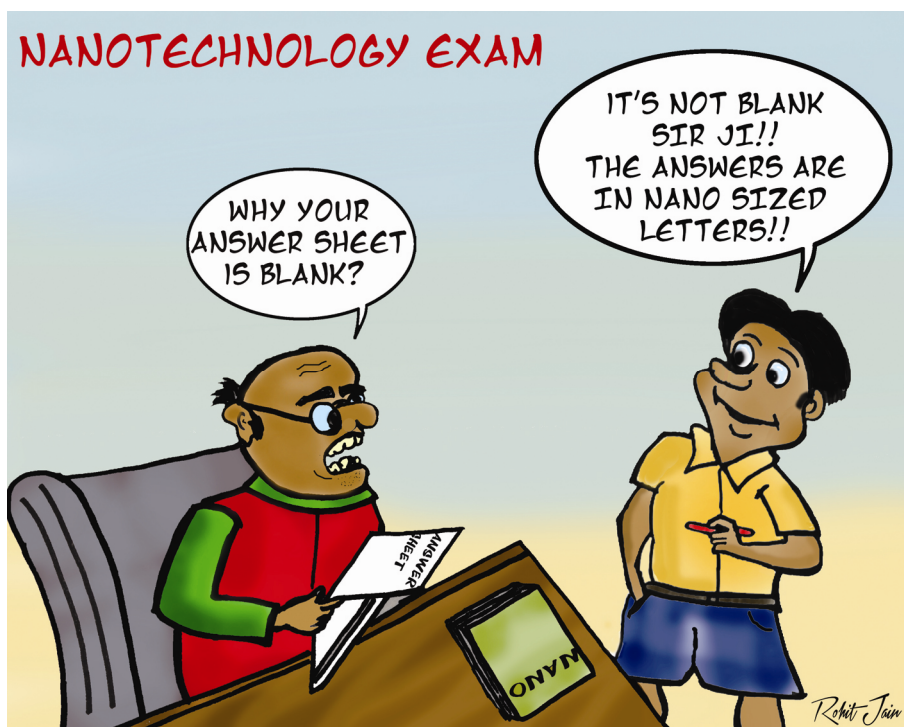
the situation. The critical question is: will they wake up? Will there be a rethink in the policy? We will wait and watch.

1. Raman, A., *Curr. Sci.*, 2015, **108**(7), 1197.

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