



## Quality sustenance and enhancement through promotion of research culture in colleges

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### ABSTRACT

Research in common parlance refers to a search of knowledge. It is also defined as a scientific and systematic exploration for pertinent information on a specific topic. It is a movement from the known to the unknown and a voyage of discovery. It comprises defining and redefining problems, formulating hypothesis or suggested solutions; collecting, organizing and evaluating data; making deductions and reaching conclusions and at last carefully testing the conclusions to determine whether they fit the formulating hypothesis. Research is thus, an original contribution to the existing stock of knowledge making for its advancement. It is the pursuit of truth with the help of study, observation, comparison and experiment. The purpose of research is to discover answers to questions through the application of scientific procedures. The main aim of research is to find out the truth which is hidden and which has not been discovered.

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### Introduction

It provides the intellectual satisfaction of knowing a few things just for the sake of knowledge and also has practical utility for the sake of being able to do something better or in a more efficient manner. Research is being looked forward to for practical guidance in solving problems.

Effective higher education as an instrument of change and escalation has always been integral, and indeed central, to the agendas of nations seeking intelligent, comprehensive and lasting socio-economic development. Institutes of higher learning like colleges and Universities are meant not only to impart quality education to graduates, but also to incubate new ideas, concepts and technologies through research. "All progress is born of inquiry, Doubt is often better than over confidence, for it leads to inquiry, and inquiry leads to invention" is a famous Hudson Maxim in which the significance of research can well be understood. It inculcates scientific and inductive thinking and it promotes the development of logical habits of thinking and organization.

Research is one of the major functions of the higher education system together with instruction and community extension services. Research as an academic function differentiates higher education from basic education.

Research and development (R&D) are two interrelated and essential stages in the creation of new concepts, ideas or processes and products directly affecting everybody's lifestyle. R&D is supposed to be the cradle of ideas, the jump-start point of technology, and benchmark of an array of developments. This is why research has become an essential-integral part of institutions of higher education because it is nurtured under its domain. Research is an academic activity that provides opportunities for professors to elevate their field of expertise to the highest international standards. The academic reputation of a professor and his standing among his colleagues depend to a large extent on the quality of his research. If the professors give priority to research endeavors the students would also get the

benefit of the research works under taken. The research projects thus taken ensure the academic growth of the institutions.

The role of research in development is ubiquitous. Development is often always spelled out by research. The economic, social, cultural and political advancements generally have their roots in one way or the other in mediocre or very sophisticated research. Research affects and improves the quality of our academic endeavors.

#### Research is the reflection of a true academician.

If this is so, have we achieved developing a research culture in colleges and universities?

It is true that most of educational institutions have given less priority to research but it is also true that they are compelled to do so because of various reasons. As educational institutions it is their utmost duty to ensure that students are well equipped for the examination. Completion of the syllabus, conduct of tests and practical examinations are must in this regard. It may not be possible for the professors to devote time to pursue their research activities. Time restraint has been the impediment for research activities. Private and unaided educational institutions may find difficulty in receiving the financial funds for the projects they under take. Most of the teachers/professors working for private unaided institutions are not suitably paid. They are under the compulsion to work for more than one institution to get the satisfactory or at least consoling amount of money. When they find it difficult to get the basic needs fulfilled, it would be unfair to expect them to take up research work which certainly demands time and money. Sometimes the administrative responsibilities the teachers are compelled to take up can also result in diminishing the research endeavor. Policy makers and the institutions are expected to address this problem seriously and must ensure the fact that teachers are well paid. It is the accountability of the institutions and policy makers to ensure that the teachers are not overburdened and the time should be properly utilized. Research can truly play an important role in engendering ideas and perception that can shape higher

education reform and policy. It is very much essential for the policy makers to realize that not all researches are useful and fruitful. Bad and futile research can be done easily and it can be done at any time, at any place, and with token financial support. It has been found necessary to implement proper plans and course of action to promote research culture in the colleges and Universities. The professors and academicians are required to change the mindset that research is done only as a requirement towards the completion of a degree, or a spare activity that faculty members can do to get points for promotion or to augment their salary. They need to shift from this mindset so that we can avoid the research reports from being condemned to eternal stagnation in some bookshelf. Colleges and universities must find ways to make research main stream activity. They are expected to set up the required structure to sustain a feasible research environment for higher education, keeping in mind that doing so is already a step towards improving the quality of higher education in the country. Higher education institutions shall ensure that the academic environment nurtures and supports research talents. Research thrives in an environment characterized by free flow of information, honest and analytical exchange of ideas, and supportive administrative structures. Higher education policies are required to enhance the individual's capacity to conduct independent and productive research. Research is one of the main functions of higher education institutions. Universities and colleges are expected to lead in the conduct of technology - directed and innovative/creative researches which are locally responsive and globally competitive. The promotion of research culture is found to be the prerequisite in the colleges and universities.

#### **How to promote research culture in the colleges?**

Much has been said already about the necessity of promoting the research activities in the colleges. It does not just happen. Many steps are found necessary to promote the research culture.

But when it comes to the question of how this is to be executed one has to define what research culture is.

Culture is defined as the totality of socially transmitted behavior patterns, arts, beliefs, institutions, and all other products of human work and thought characteristics of a community or population. In academe, there is - or at least there ought to be - such a thing as a research culture. A research culture may be defined as a tradition of scholarly activities related to the production of new knowledge.

#### **Developing a culture needs a philosophy.**

Research in higher education should aspire at developing critical and independent inquiry for the advancement of knowledge observing the highest standards of excellence and reliability. It should seek to bring about enhancement in education and extension to push higher education in being excellent, more relevant and responsive to the needs of a globally competitive but locally responsive human resource base.

To foster good academic research, colleges and universities should think of having wide range initiatives: 1. Establishment of on-campus research institutes or centers to provide conducive set up for academic research. The heads of the institutions or the heads of the departments should play their roles as catalysts in promoting the research activities. When a research culture

among the faculty members is established, funds, incentives and, other concessions are apt to spillover.

2. Establishment of the strong collaboration among colleges, universities and industries regarding the transfer of technology, skills, and research programs would certainly augment the research culture.

3. The institutes and the managements of the colleges are required to conduct orientation programmes and training programmes to facilitate the researchers. If proper training and orientation are imparted, the researchers would find it uncomplicated to prepare the project proposals and reports. Proper guidance for the novice is very much sought for in the promotion of research culture.

4. Campus networking system can also endorse research culture. Computer is certainly one of the most versatile and ingenious developments of the modern technological age. Proper exposure to the basics of computer technology, methods and uses of computers and to make use Internet would certainly advance the research culture in the colleges.

5. The researchers should be made familiar with adequate information about the funding agencies. Executive in charge of establishing contact with the funding agencies and the proper utilization of the funds received would certainly lessen the administrative burdens the researchers have to take up.

6. Well advanced Library facility is one of the prerequisites the institutions or the colleges have to conjure up in the promotion of research culture so that the researcher should be in a position to get all the necessary information for the research work under taken.

7. The colleges should promote the establishment of study circles and intellectual meets so that the researchers could exchange their views and information they have gathered.

Apart from the suggestions made above, the institutes or the colleges should think of promoting Human resource management attitude. This approach is expected to enhance the commitment and efficiency of the man power. If the attitudes and aspirations of the people who are working in the organization/ college/ university are given due attention and efforts are made to accomplish the requirements and desires of the work force, they can certainly consider research as the activity of paramount importance. To ensure the proper human resource management, there is a need to increase the meager amount of salary the teaching faculty in the non-UGC segment is getting, lessen the burden the teachers have to put up with, keep the teachers away from administrative and unproductive activities are found inevitable. The institutions and the colleges should strive to achieve this without fail. The policy makers are expected to play a crucial role in enhancing the grants allotted for Higher Education.

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