

CONCEPT NOTE

POLICY TO ATTRACT TALENT TO 14 NATIONAL UNIVERSITIES

INTRODUCTION

The dawn of the 21st century has heralded the development of India as an economic powerhouse powered by a revolution in the knowledge sector. However, the knowledge economy is not just a synonym for information economy or information society. In the present age, knowledge economies address how information and ideas are created, used, circulated and adapted at an accelerating speed in “knowledge-based communities,” i.e. networks of individuals striving to produce and circulate new knowledge. In knowledge economies, these capacities are not just the property of individuals, but also of organizations, which have the capacity to share, create and apply new knowledge continuously over time, in cultures of mutual learning and continuous innovation. Innovation carries spin-off benefits and yields social dividends for the broader civil society – through reductions in poverty, improved health, greater education, empowerment of women and decline in levels of criminality. Universities are places where ideas germinate, where applications grow out of ideas and where innovation flourishes in an atmosphere of intellectual challenge and freedom. Universities where the faculty and students constantly challenge existing boundaries of knowledge amidst a prevailing culture of creativity, are ideally positioned to be the powerhouse of the knowledge economy.

Despite having one of the largest higher education systems in the world, only a few institutions of learning have been able to make a mark on the global stage. The contribution of the alumni of the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), the Indian Institute of Science and the Indian Institutes of Managements (IIMs) have been widely recognised all over the world. India is positioned to adopt a leadership role in the global knowledge economy of the future. In the past, cheap labour and low technology manufacturing skills powered several developing countries to prosperity. But the coming age would patently belong to those countries who are able to reap the benefits of creative knowledge

organisations that exist within. Recognising this, the XI Plan proposes the establishment of 14 National Universities aimed at world class standards. These Universities would be at the fount of making India the global knowledge hub and set benchmarks for excellence for other Central and State Universities. The first and foremost criterion for a University to be termed world class is the quality and excellence of its research, recognised by society and peers in the academic world. Research that constantly pushes back the frontiers of knowledge contributes to the development of the knowledge society but more critically creates the attraction for outstanding faculty and top students to gravitate towards it. This creates a virtuous spiral of ever-increasing quality and excellence ceaselessly pushing the University to strive towards even better research. Students move towards top class institutions after an evaluation of the ability of the institution to invest them with the skill and competencies to be successes in the knowledge economy, besides the excellence of its research. Consequently, the synergies between teaching and research have to be exploited to create quality institutions.

If excellence in research and teaching are the essential elements of a world class institution, the ability to attract and retain outstanding faculty from all over the world would be central to this approach. The Indian diaspora of highly skilled knowledge workers have been at the forefront of growth and development in the developed nations. This diaspora, given the right incentives and challenges, could be the seeds for the concentration of talent from across the world in the Universities proposed to be established. The policy to attract talent to the National Universities aims to provide the right environment to enable the knowledge talent around the world to cluster in the National Universities proposed to be developed as Global Centres of Innovation.

POLICY OUTLINE:

Research can be broadly classified into four areas: pure basic research or theoretical research which develops new ideas or knowledge growing from the current breadth and depth of knowledge, strategic basic research which also

develops new ideas but with the potential of applications being derived from such research, applied research that grows from already known principles to develop new applications and experimental research that attempts to validate known principles or develop new products and technology. Private research has tended to focus largely on technology development having industrial and commercial applications, whereas pure basic and strategic research have characteristics of public goods and have largely been subject to public provisioning. However, pure basic research and strategic research are the crucibles on which applied research or technological developments are grown. Universities are the ideal breeding ground for such research, provided the right atmosphere and talent is available for the purpose.

Attracting talent towards institutions requires a balance of the right enabling environment i.e. academic and intellectual freedom, adequate funding unhindered by bureaucratic questioning from within as well as outside the institution, availability of resources and aids to access existing treasures of knowledge, a challenging and intellectually stimulating academic environment all ensconced within a quality of life that can be enjoyed. A reputation for excellence with all these factors in place, is built over time with sustained efforts and demonstrated capacity to deliver the environment. The 14 National Universities, though having the advantage of starting on a clean slate unencumbered by history or culture of the past, would require credible assurances to be made and maintained to build a reputation for excellence. The Government accepts that governance structures would have to be evolved that lends reliability to the promises made to attract talent. The Government is, therefore, conscious of the fact that the principles outlined in the policy are pledges of a sovereign authority to develop and maintain a structure that respects freedom and autonomy backed with adequate funding within the limits of the possible.

ACADEMIC FREEDOMS:

The Government shall ensure that the governance structure of the University shall be tuned towards ensuring complete autonomy over all matters

specifically academic matters, including but not limited to admissions, curriculum, research, assessment, award of degrees, selection of members of the professorate and the basic direction of the academic work in the University. The autonomy shall be multi-faceted operating at various levels – at the level of the University vis-à-vis Government, at the level of the Faculty vis-à-vis the University, at the level of the Researcher vis-à-vis the Faculty or University and at the level of the Teacher vis-à-vis the Faculty or Faculties.

The National Universities shall be kept out of the purview of the regulatory oversight of the existing regulatory bodies in higher education in academic matters as well as regulations on maintenance of standards or minimum qualification requirements for appointment to academic posts.

Academia shall have full freedom in research and in the publication of results arising out of such research. The free spirit of inquiry and the quest for knowledge shall be the defining principles that shall pervade all aspects of academic life. To that end, researchers shall have the freedom to patent the results of their research jointly with the University without getting the same approved or validated by the University administration or by any Government agency or authority except in a certain number of limited strategic areas that has the potential of being misused for the destruction of life or property on a large scale.

Teachers shall have full freedom to structure the pedagogy including its delivery by them within the broad parameters of the programmes objectives set by the Academic Body of the Faculty or Faculties, in case of an inter-disciplinary programme or course. To that end, the University Academic administration shall have the power to decide on the start a programme or course keeping in view the overall availability of resources, but the parameters and the objectives of the course or programme shall be the responsibility of the Faculty or Faculties having a bearing on the course and the structuring of the course contents, curriculum and assessment methodology shall be entirely with the purview of the teacher assigned to teach the course or programme. The class room shall also be freed from the boundaries of physical space in that the electronic medium shall also function as a central element in the teaching-learning process.

The Government recognises that adequate funding is essential to support the university's research and teaching as well as its other functions and that such support must be consistent, predictable and long-term. A Research Endowment Fund of an adequate amount not less than Rs X crores per University shall be provided annually. The University shall also have the freedom to source funding from all other non-Governmental sources subject to the broad limitations that such funding shall not be from unverified or dubious sources or from sources with a biased outlook. Grants from this Fund shall be made available to individual research proposals emanating from the faculty of the University. The research proposals shall be evaluated by an Academic Research Peer Group consisting of a collegium of eminent academics, not limited to those working in or part of the University, for deciding funding eligibility. Once approved, the Research Group shall have the freedom to utilise the grants according to procedures defined by the Group subject to the broad principles of objectivity and transparency in such procedures. This freedom shall include the freedom to procure aids and equipments required for research, freedom to appoint subordinate research personnel such as Research Associates and Research Assistants, freedom to decide an adequate remuneration to be paid to such research personnel. The only limitation that would operate is the total funding outlay approved by the Academic Peer Group for the period specified for completing the research.

The amount spent by the University or its academics on research or teaching shall be kept out of the purview of audit scrutiny envisaged under the Constitution by the Comptroller and Auditor General. An amendment to that effect shall be made in the Comptroller and Auditor General's (Duties, Powers and Conditions of Service) Act, 1971. Accountability shall be ensured by reviews by the Academic Research Peer Group for research work and Teaching Peer Group for course work & teaching. To that end, scrutiny and accountability shall be defined by outcomes rather than processes.

The University shall have the freedom to establish Chairs of Studies with funding thru' non-Government endowments to be occupied by Professors of eminence. The Chair Professors shall be entitled to receive pay, if any, from the endowments in addition of the salary payable by the University.

Autonomy over appointments, especially academic appointments, are crucial to the inculcation of an atmosphere of autonomy within the University. Consequently, the University shall have the freedom to define its own appointment criteria for making appointments to academic positions in the University. This shall include the freedom to make appointments by invitation, based on the recommendations of a Standing Search Committee consisting entirely of prominent and eminent academicians, from within the University or outside. Any Professor of the University shall have the freedom to refer an outstanding person with a proven capability to enhance the reputation of the University to the Standing Search Committee for appointment as a member of the Faculty at the Associate Professor or Professor levels. Recognising that brilliance is not a factor of age of a person or years spent in research, the appointment by invitation shall not be subject to limitations of age or years of experience of the considered candidate.

Faculty at the level of Professor shall be offered tenured service to provide job security, whereas faculty at the level of Associate Professor or Assistant Professor may be provided tenured or non-tenured service, which will be appropriately decided by the University on objective criteria. The University shall also have the freedom to appoint adjunct or associate faculty involved in research in industry or in R&D establishments in the country and abroad. These faculty members will guide students and deliver lectures in specialised areas and bring their expertise in these areas to enhance value to the teaching-learning process.

The University shall also have the freedom to define the pay structure thru' a negotiated arrangement, which shall be net of the tax payable, for its senior faculty i.e. Professors and Associate Professors, within a broad pay band to provide incentives to attract talent from over the world, including persons involved in path-breaking research in industry.

Liberal book grants equivalent to a percentage of pay shall be provided to Teaching & Research Faculty to update their knowledge constantly in a fast changing environment.

ENABLING ENVIRONMENT:

The Government commits to provide funding for all infrastructure and resources including library and laboratory facilities and electronic resources of world class standards on a continuing basis to enable knowledge growth and the germination of new ideas.

The Citizenship Act, 1955, as amended in 2003, does not allow Persons of Indian Origin who are citizens of another country to be appointed to public services and posts in connection with the affairs of the Union. In order to ensure that the highly skilled Indian diaspora is able to participate in the development of world class institutions in the country, a suitable enactment or notification, as may be required, shall be made to remove this limitation which would permit the person to retain his/her citizenship of another country and at the same time be a tenured or non-tenured faculty of the University academia.

The Government commits to provide a high quality of life within the environs of the University campus with access to schooling, health, leisure, entertainment and residential facilities to stimulate faculty and student.

Academia-industry interaction may be essential to incubate new technologies or products emerging out of research. While research and its outcomes would be entirely within the domain of the University, Incubation Centres may be established in the campus with the assistance of industry or donors to promote use of innovations for the benefit of the nation in particular and mankind in general. Assistance for venture capital funding may be ensured within the environs of the University for those who require such capital to start up or ramp up new technology emerging from research results for the benefit of mankind.

Recognising the fact that talent tends to cluster, networks of eminent persons from the Indian diaspora working in Universities abroad or involved in research establishments in industry shall be formed to act as facilitators for the sourcing of world-wide talent for appointment to the Universities.

The Government shall ensure suitable facilitation for immigration of persons desirous of working in the National Universities.

The Government shall provide for duty free imports of equipments, books and other material required for teaching and research in the University.

ANCHORS:

The Government shall seek the assistance of pre-eminent persons whether scientists, researchers or academicians with the stature and eminence world-wide, such as Nobel laureates etc., to act as anchors to guide, promote and lead the University to achieve world class standards.

CONCLUSION:

The Government recognises that the growth of knowledge has accelerated in recent years and bright minds clustered in the right environment would spark a knowledge revolution. Knowledge does not recognise frontiers but the offshoots of knowledge development could prove to be a key factor to provide an impetus to finding solutions to economic and social problems of the nation and the region.