

Experts call for review of research institutes by international panels

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Pune: Developing a good postdoctoral system for research, assessment of leading public and private research institutes by international panels, and assessment of various disciplines of science and social studies, were some of the key issues that dominated the discussions on the concluding day of the National Policy Dialogue, 2012, here on Saturday.

"There is a need to focus on the postdoctoral activity by research scholars," said K N Ganesh, director of the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER), while speaking at the event, which has been jointly organised by the British Council and the Planning Commission.

"We just do not have access to a good postdoctoral system in India," he said, adding, "The problem is not as much with the fellowships and money as it is with the dearth of people in the Indian system. Most research fellows tend to move to institutes abroad, which is understandable from the viewpoint of their career, but we need to have a good system of our own," he said.

Rajiv Saxena, vice-president of the South Asia University, New Delhi, said, "The fountainhead of good research work remains in the west, but policymakers in India also need to be sensitised about the various infrastructural and cultural issues that keep a researcher away from engaging in postdoctoral activity in India. It's not just about funding research projects."

Spenta Wadia, director, International Centre for Theoretical Sci-



Sadanand Godse

S Sivaram, former director, NCL, at the national policy dialogue on 'Research excellence framework' on Saturday

ences, suggested that international committees need to assess the capital input going into leading public and private research institutions in India, and the corresponding output generated by them. "There has to be a correlation between funding and accountability," he said.

Jawaharlal Nehru University vice-chancellor S K Sopory suggested that each research institute should have an international advisory committee for such assessment. Focus also needs to be given on the recruitment policy for research institutes, by bringing in greater flexibility to let foreign researchers and faculty work in India for an extended time, he said.

H A Ranganath, director of the National Assessment and Accreditation Council, said that apart from assessing institutions and individual re-

searchers, disciplines also need to be assessed to find out the state of chemistry, physics and other disciplines of science, as well as social studies.

Mathew Davidson from the University of Bath, UK, listed 11 broad areas for the academic and research community in India, to seek appropriate action from policy makers in higher education and research. This included issues related to translating assessment and ideas into policy and action, research environment and culture, collaboration with industry, building network and alliances, metrics vs expert review approach, availability of research information, importance of teaching in research institutes, large multi-partner projects and diversity of institutions, among others.

Advisor to Planning Commission

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K N Ganesh | DIRECTOR, IISER

on higher education matters, Pawan Agarwal, said, "Much of these issues are already incorporated in various plan documents, but what is needed is proper articulation of these views at multiple levels to help shape public policy."

He said, "Various working groups formed at the NPD 2012 will now submit papers on definite topics outlined by Davidson and the same will be forwarded to all vice-chancellors and heads of research institutions for a wider discussion and eventual reflection in the plan panel's 12th Five-Year Plan report."

Earlier, National Chemical Laboratory's former director S Sivaram delivered the keynote address on 'vision and performance of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research'.