

In search of good teachers

This refers to the concerns expressed on the educational status in India in two articles, one in the vision document on India titled 'India as a global leader in science'¹ and the other that appeared recently in *Current Science*². As observed by Pandit², majority of our educational institutions appear to convert brilliant students who come with high aspirations and expectations into mediocre persons, mainly because of the poor quality of teachers. Since the UGC stipulates Ph D as an essential qualification for the recruitment of teachers and most institutions produce low-quality PhDs, mediocrity creeps into the field of higher education. Nowadays, hundreds of universities and colleges give Ph D degrees, for a fee, for those enrolled without passing entrance tests like UGC/CSIR, GATE or their equivalent. It is an irony that we have entrance tests for LKG and not for the highest degree in many places. These candidates spend three years doing some mediocre work and write a thesis; their guides fix favourable examiners to evaluate it and finally get Ph D.

As quoted in the vision document, countries like Japan, Finland and South Korea have found ways to attract teachers, with South Korea recruiting the top 5% of graduates for this profession. It

suggests the need for India to experiment with new methods for getting the best teachers. One method worth experimenting may be a kind of national certification of teachers along the lines of Red Hat Certified Engineer examination. This is an international examination which is tough and stringent, aimed at certifying the cream of candidates who appear for the test. It does not insist on any qualification like a basic engineering degree. Anyone with an aptitude and motivation in the field can take this examination. The small fraction of candidates who are successful in the examination become prestigious engineers often sought by corporate enterprises. Similarly, an examination for those who want to become teachers, the certified teachers examination (CTE) may be conducted in our country. Anyone inclined to become a dedicated teacher should be permitted to take this examination, whether he/she has a Ph D or not. For accreditation of educational institutions, high weightage should be given to the number of certified teachers that they have. The certified teachers should also have an edge over uncertified teachers for positions demanding leadership and talent.

A central or international agency may be entrusted with conducting this exami-

nation. The top 5–10% of candidates who pass the CTE may be certified as National Certified Teachers. We have IITs for organizing CTE in engineering and institutions like IISc and JNU for organizing CTE in science. Appropriate institutions may be identified for organizing CTE in arts subjects. For the entry-level positions in colleges and universities, selection of top rank-holders of national exams like CSIR, NET, GATE or CTE should be made mandatory if India is to get high-quality teachers for its schools and colleges. Teachers with high-quality research performance (as evidenced strictly by publications in high impact journals) must be professionally and monetarily rewarded³.

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1. Science Advisory Council to the Prime Minister, Vision document, Department of Science and Technology, New Delhi, 2010.
 2. Pandit, M. K., *Curr. Sci.*, 2010, **99**, 728–730.
 3. Narayana Moorthy, N. R., *The Hindu*, 29 October 2010, p. 13.
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