

Implications of hiring diverse faculty for higher education in India

High quality research and education are necessary for a country's economic growth and prosperity in competitive global markets. India is severely affected by scarcity of people engaged in academic and industrial research¹. A serious concern has been expressed about the current method of research scientist/faculty recruitment by academic institutes of higher education in India; why only Indian nationals can be appointed in this age of globalized science and technology^{2,3} when the top institutions of the world are quite open to hiring talented people without any race, colour or nationality bias. However, there was a recent controversy in one of the best universities (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) regarding gender bias in faculty hiring at the institute⁴. A detailed study also showed the low representation of coloured staff in US universities⁵. A report on US national academies claims that there is no gender bias in faculty hiring processes and gender does not appear to be a factor in career transitions and outcomes⁶.

There are several strategies being suggested to maintain high quality faculties in higher education and research institutes such as consideration of early retirement programmes and recruiting younger faculties⁷, implementation of interdisciplinary and cross-institutional study in the universities^{8,9}. Sa⁹ discussed, based on the reports from the US national academies of sciences and the Association of American Universities,

that universities reshaped themselves to hire researchers from interdisciplinary background and increased collaboration from multidisciplinary research. It has been found that institutions with interdisciplinary culture gain an edge in getting more funding from the research market⁸. However, the interdisciplinary research trend in India is not very common in most of the sectors excluding few areas of environmental science and technology.

Several initiatives have been taken recently in India to strengthen the standard of education and academic research in collaboration with industries. The National Knowledge Commission (a high-level advisory board of the Prime Minister of India for maintenance and passing recommendations about educational standard) has recently published a report and submitted an open letter to the Prime Minister of India regarding the current situation of higher education and research institutes, urgent requirement of talented young faculty of international standard, and creation of better research environment for talented PhDs for motivation of undergraduate students towards research in science and technology¹. Currently, top research and higher education institutions of India are not allowed to hire talented people from all over the world. The research facilities and start-up salary packages are not on par with international organizations and do not attract even Indian nationals pursuing

research in globally recognized institutions. The higher education faculty hiring policy of the government is based on nationality, race, gender, colour and religion which has resulted in diluting the quality of research and development in India.

1. National Knowledge Commission. More quality PhDs, 2008; <http://knowledge-commission.gov.in/downloads/documents/moreQualityPhD.pdf>
2. Sharma, O. P., *Curr. Sci.*, 2009, **96**, 1560.
3. Lakhtakiya, A., *Curr. Sci.*, 2009, **97**, 613–614.
4. Lawler, A., *Science*, 2006, **313**, 284.
5. Smith, D. G., Turner, C. S., Osei-Kofi, N. and Richards, S., *J. Higher Educ.*, 2004, **75**, 133–160.
6. Mervis, J., *Science*, 2009, **324**, 1250–1251.
7. Clark, R. L. and d'Ambrosio, M. B., *Educ. Gerontol.*, 2005, **31**, 385–403.
8. Mansilla, V. B., Feller, I. and Gardner, H., *Res. Evaluation*, 2006, **15**, 69–74.
9. Sa, C. M., *Higher Educ.*, 2008, **55**, 537–552.

PRABHAKAR SHARMA^{1,*}
KUMARI ARCHANA SHARMA²

¹Department of Biotechnology,
Chemistry and Environmental
Engineering,

Aalborg University, DK-9000,
Aalborg, Denmark

²District Commissioner Office,
Ranchi 834 001, India

*e-mail: ps@bio.aau.dk

Relocation of villages in Sariska Tiger Reserve

The Sariska Tiger Reserve, one of the important tiger habitats of Central India, came into limelight because of the disappearance of tigers from the area. It exemplifies another 'protected area' in the country facing immense threats and complexities due to the local communities residing within the protected areas. With 10 villages located within the core zone I, i.e. the notified national park area, a total of 31 villages are located in the entire Tiger Reserve in addition to

more than 200 villages present in the contiguous area. The local communities inhabiting these villages mainly belong to the Gujjar community who practice animal husbandry as their main source of livelihood. Heavy dependence of these villages on the forest resources of Sariska for a long time is posing a severe threat to wildlife and wildlands.

Since 1982, some unsuccessful attempts have been made to relocate villages of the national park. However, successful

relocation of the village Bhagani in November 2007 and village Kankwari recently was possible after reintroduction of tigers into the area. The fate of these tigers however depends upon the behaviour of the local communities. It is a well-known fact that the villagers located in the national park are entirely dependent on the forest resources for their daily requirements since time immemorial. But the question that arises is, will the relocation of just ten villages be enough