

Appointment of Vice-Chancellors in universities

D. K. Basa in his write up (*Curr. Sci.*, 2001, **80**, 1364) laments the poor quality of academic leadership provided by Vice-Chancellors in our universities and Directors in national research institutions, because of a faulty system of appointment and selection. He points out that the high priests of academic and scientific organizations in modern-day India succumb to political pressure and instead of confronting the political bosses to defend quality and truth like Asutosh Mukherjee, behave like chameleons and depend on political bosses.

Basa suggests the citation counts of a candidate be mandatory for an objective assessment of quality, in addition to other selection criteria of Vice-Chancellors/Directors. In pre-independence India, Vice-Chancellors of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras Universities

were appointed by none other than the Governor-General of India. Asutosh Mukherjee got as many as five terms as Vice-Chancellor and was not removed even when the Secretary of Education of British India gave an adverse report against him for his nationalistic views. But in independent India, Vice-Chancellors in state-run universities are appointed by the Governors (in their capacity as Chancellors) on the recommendations of the Chief Ministers of the respective states. Hence, political interference is an inherent character of our university system. When the political leadership changes in a state, the first casualty are the Vice-Chancellors, who are either asked to resign or shown the door by other means. It happened time and again in Haryana and in some other states of India. Our universities

have become hotbeds of politics and the Vice-Chancellors are obliged to play to the tunes of their political bosses. This vitiates the academic environment in the university campuses, with faculty and students pulling the strings with the involvement of political bosses. The universities are thus reduced to act as extension centres of the state government.

To improve upon the present system of appointments of Vice-Chancellors in Indian Universities, the following criteria may be followed uniformly in all state-run and central universities: (i) The term of a Vice-Chancellor should be fixed, e.g. 5 years and no further extension should be given. (ii) A panel of experts consisting of topmost academicians should be constituted, to advise the Chief Minister/Governor of a state

CORRESPONDENCE

in matters of appointment. (iii) The University Grants Commission (UGC) should lay down selection criteria for appointment of Vice-Chancellors, to be followed by all universities funded by it. Surprisingly, there are minimum qualifications laid down for all the posts, from a peon to a professor, but there are none for the topmost post in the university. (iv) In addition to admin-

istrative experience of a candidate, the highest consideration must be given to research contributions made by him. The citation analysis may be used to determine the quality of research output. (v) There should be a mid-term review of the progress made by the university, so that the Vice-Chancellor may be made accountable for his actions. (vi) Above all, political interference

should be reduced to the minimum in running the affairs of Indian universities.

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