

Editorial
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Quality teaching at public universities

Proposed new rules merit consideration

PLANS to put in place a uniform set of rules relating to recruitment and promotion procedures at public universities are surely welcome. Part of the reason lies in the fact that our public universities have remained afflicted with problems that ought not to have been the case given the legacy such institutions of higher learning have traditionally enjoyed. Of the problems, a fundamental one has been the politicisation that has taken hold of the university, to the extent that even academic positions came to be affected by it. Additionally, appointments and promotions of officers and employees of the public universities raised a good number of questions in recent times. One, therefore, hardly needs to emphasise the fact that when universities come under a question mark, it is time to think about corrective measures.

The University Grants Commission, perhaps in a clear acknowledgement of what needs to be done, has prepared and submitted a set of draft rules that aim at doing away with the ailments currently stymieing the work of the public universities. Such rules, if and when they are implemented, should lead to a restoration of quality education through ensuring the growth and prevalence of standards that one expects to be at work in the institutions of higher learning. Over the last many years, the public universities have suffered badly in terms of teaching through the appointment of teachers whose academic antecedents were not as they ought to have been. Individuals with fewer or qualitatively lower than the required degrees of academic achievement have been seen making their way into teaching positions. Sometimes deserving candidates were bypassed in favour of patently inferior ones. These and other difficulties should now be pushed aside and the public universities, through the suggested new rules, should go for a qualitative change across the board. One might add here that a cleansing process is required at the universities if the goal is for them to recover the glory which was once their defining characteristic.

There is, of course, the matter of what is to be done with those individuals who are already working as academics, having been appointed through means that the proposed rules seek to put a check to. The priorities should be clear here: a full and judicious review of their cases is in order. If the aim of the suggested new measures is ensuring transparency in the public universities, let no stumbling block stand in the way.