

NITI Aayog for less teaching, more research

Favours hiring of faculty from abroad

JACOB KOSHY
NEW DELHI

To ensure that investments in research better translate to more products and bolster “innovation and development” The National Institution for the Transformation of India (NITI) Aayog has recommended that faculty at “world class” institutions prioritise research and be allowed to “reduce their teaching responsibility,” if required.

Such universities also ought to be allowed to recruit research staff from abroad and be encouraged to compete for research projects from industry. The so-called ‘world class universities’ are part of a government-outlined plan to raise funding for 10 public and 10 private universities and mould them into institutions that rank among the world’s best.

The names of these institutions are expected to be made public later this year.

Vision document

The NITI Aayog suggestions stem from a three-year vision document that outlines targets and goals the Ministries – from railways to environment – ought to achieve by 2020.

Universities ought to be ranked according to metrics such as teaching, research output and funding won from the private sector.

“Gradually, this model may be extended to bring other universities in the fold,” the report adds.

The NITI Aayog also pitches for a new ‘National Science, Technology and Innovation Foundation’

headed by a distinguished scientist. This will coordinate with science and technology departments, ministries, governments and private sector bodies and deliberate on national issues and recommend interventions.

Such an organisation will review progress of projects every six months and propose “course corrections” for achieving these goals.

Database of schemes

The organisation also proposes a database of all existing schemes related to science and technology across ministries and departments. This will have information on the coordinating ministry, its objectives and available funds. Its key purpose would be to avoid “duplication of efforts, reduce approval times, increase accountability and collaboration between entities and measured outcomes,” the report adds.

The organisation has also pushed for more public private partnerships.

S&T projects, the report notes, are “different than those” in infrastructure primarily because they are riskier and take longer to fructify.

“We should develop clear guidelines for implementing these projects...and administer a clear funding mechanism for government financing,” it notes.

Given the government’s “limited funds” the NITI Aayog recommends research priorities to water management, agriculture, energy, waste management, health, connectivity and security.