# Approaching Research

## Research and the New Education Policy

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**Call for a Robust Eco-System**

Taking cognisance of the need for expanding the knowledge and its application across a broad range of disciplines, the National Education Policy 2020 highlights the priority for shaping and strengthening a robust ecosystem of research in India. The policy also underlines the indispensability of such an ecosystem, considering the rapid changes occurring in the world and also the specific needs of India. As one of the three largest economies in the world, India has a huge magnitude of need to transform both the quality and quantity of research. Large talent pools need to be created for expanding the research capabilities as well as output. The key approaches suggested include the enhancement of the proportion of research investments as a share of GDP, on par with other nations that are leading in research and innovation across the globe. The policy also recognises the need for high-quality interdisciplinary research across diverse fields in order to effectively meet the challenges relevant to our vital needs such as

clean drinking water, sanitation, quality education and healthcare, improved transportation, air quality, energy, infrastructure and so on.

**National Research Foundation as a Driver**

Even if one considers certain overriding needs for importing and adapting relevant research from abroad for timely solutions, the long term effectiveness and the benefit of such a

strategy hinges on our abilities to conduct our research and gain freedom from a perpetual dependence in critical areas. As a game-changer, the National Education Policy proposes the establishment of a new mechanism called the National Research Foundation (NRF). NRF will be an overarching body promoting avoidance of duplication of efforts at a national level and serving as a national coordinating mechanism.

Addressing a long-standing gap, the policy also underscores the importance of enhancing the role of Higher Education Institutions in the fields of research and innovation. The share of funding for research in Higher Education Institutions out of the public funding for research in India had been far too low in comparison to that of many countries well known for their research impacts. Along with advocacy for greater funding of this sector, the policy proposes more discovery-based learning from the level of school education and the inclusion of research and internship in the undergraduate curriculum. Through its merit-based competitive funding process, the National Research Foundation is touted as an enabler for fostering and promoting research culture in universities.

**Multi and Interdisciplinary Research**

In the context of NEP, we address the question as to how we can intensify multi and interdisciplinary research in higher education. At the outset, in defining the scope of research problems, the multi or interdisciplinary nature of real-life issues and needs are to be recognised and integrated. A proven way then is to constitute research teams comprised of members specialising in diverse disciplines relevant to the research problem. For research leading to PhD too, it is necessary to transcend the traditional approach of uni-disciplinary orientation for research committees and administrative mechanisms that could inhibit multidisciplinary research. Encouraging multi or interdisciplinary research, there are abundant titles of journals that publish such research findings.

Further, an effective way in which research impacts can be improved is to involve the users as stakeholders, particularly in the field of applied research. Such involvement can take various forms including their strong contribution to the funding. This step would strengthen the accountability and focus of research efforts and can also promote a system of performance-based incentives to growth. Thus the connection between research and innovation can flourish. Turning to the potential that India holds for becoming an attractive

destination for higher education, greater research collaborations at the international level can strengthen such prospects.

**JAIN's Research Journey**

As part of its programmes, JAIN had been offering a sizable number of multi or inter-disciplinary courses such as Gender Studies, Neuro-Psychology, Artificial Intelligence Applications and so on. An effective way in which we can develop further potential in this regard is to undertake the development and delivery of courses with a combined effort of faculty from different departments. The need centric or problem-centric basis for curricular designs will expand the multi-disciplinary content in academics. Thanks to the presence and vision of the interdisciplinary research centres such as the Centre for Nano and Material Sciences, Fire and Combustion Research Centre, the Centre for Research in Social Sciences and Education and the Centre for Ancient History and Culture, there is a natural potential to create further linkages with activities of other departments to strengthen their multi-disciplinary interactions.

**Interdisciplinary Research involving Social Sciences**

Multi or interdisciplinary research involving humanities and social sciences becomes extremely critical when advances in modern science and technology are to be applied in the societal context where the creation of economic or social value, understanding of human behaviour, collective actions, communications and ethics play a significant role. Experience in recent decades with systems dealing with market economies and consumerism, the highly skewed concentration of wealth in modern societies, the geopolitical dynamics and conflicts, and serious threats for environmental security have shown strains that could have far-reaching adverse impacts on the wellbeing of humanity at large. At the same time, in this modern era, there are many things right that need celebration and embracing on a larger scale. In the research that deals with these issues and seeks solutions, the need for insights from arts, humanities and social sciences hardly require emphasis.

**Looking Forward**

JAIN's endeavours in the coming years to accelerate research will encompass engaging students, right from the UG level by developing a research-oriented mind, and training them to carry out projects focussed on publications in peer-reviewed journals. It is also planned to

create the pull effect for research through the strengthening of the links between the research and innovation, and, through the launch of some uniquely designed institutional schemes. In expanding the knowledge that meets the needs of contemporary society, new means are to be created for faculty members too for regular interaction across different disciplines. This would require a change in the organisational structure of the university in terms of creating or adding a matrix form of organisation, which will enable inter disciplinary interaction and team-based working across disciplines. Thematic centres on research will promote interdisciplinarity as they engage in addressing high priority demands of the society in areas such as water resources, health, energy, culture and ecology.

Finally, on a philosophical note, we can see the ultimate purpose of all research is to expand knowledge by a process of unfolding what is within. There is no existence of knowledge independent of the knower. All that is recorded into books or other forms of objective knowledge is but a lower manifestation of knowledge. The best representation of the knowledge is to be found in the depths of human experience and practice itself. It is in this perspective that we can perceive an intricate and lasting connection between the scope of humanities and social sciences and the field of research, which is a pathway in the quest for human knowledge.