

Dhar and Rao have once again failed to follow the argument in our paper that India should not accept Dunkel proposals on TRIPS in toto.

Finally, while we tend to disagree with the tenor and content of the discussion by Dhar and Rao on the grounds discussed above, we however, feel obliged to thank them for pointing out the typing error of RCA expanded as 'Relative Competitive Advantage' in the tables though it has been correctly printed in the text as 'Revealed Competitive Advantage'; for pointing out the error that 'all developing countries' and 'not all countries' get a transition period of five years; for pointing out

that the issue of 'pipeline protection' has been given in the Dunkel draft text; for making us realise that the patents of 'many' and not 'most' American drugs are expected to expire in 1990-95; and finally, for accepting our paper as an academic article.

References

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Crisis in Sociological Research

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VEENA DAS's article 'Sociological Research in India: The State of Crisis' (*EPW*, June 5) makes interesting reading. I am inclined to say that the situation is no different in the other branches of social sciences. The article should serve as an eye-opener to all those who are interested in the development of sociology in particular and social science in general.

Veena Das points out that while students cannot be trained to do brilliant research they can and must be trained to do competent research. Research performance to a large extent depends not only on the students' calibre but also their commitment to the discipline. "It is well known that in India the majority of the brighter students are attracted to science, technology and professional courses. Even amongst those who choose courses in the faculties of arts, social sciences and humanities, the brighter ones tend to choose either mathematics or economics. Obviously, those students who choose sociology are not necessarily the best, nor do they necessarily have any clear notion of why they chose the subject which has definite implications for their interest and performance" (Damle 1974). It is a matter of regret that students tend to choose sociology as a last resort when they find other options not possible or available. If they are primarily interested in attaining a formal degree what might one expect from them in respect of pursuing further studies and contributing something to the discipline?

M N Srinivas and Panini (1973) say that there is no attempt to restrict admissions on the basis of qualifications and aptitude. Thus all and sundry are allowed to pursue their studies in sociology. This is one of the main reasons why high quality research in sociol-

ogy is not forthcoming.

Who is to be blamed for such a state of affairs? It is common knowledge that appointments are made frequently on grounds other than merit. In the words of M N Srinivas (1993): "Many if not most of our universities and other centres of higher learning have become cockpits for caste, regional and linguistic conflict and intrigue and both teaching and research are in a deplorable condition. Appointments are made frequently on grounds other than merit. In fact, 'merit' has become a dirty word in the lexicon of the advocates of caste quotas and the progressives." When substandard recruits are placed at the helm of affairs the net result is negative.

Das has pointed out that in doctoral theses there appear long lists of references and extensive bibliographies, but that the students display their ignorance when they are asked about what has been quoted. It has become ornamental to give a long list of references in the theses. But if the students are found to be not familiar with what has been referred to or quoted by them, the examiners should be bold enough to reject the theses, instead of accepting them on the basis of formal considerations. Strict scrutiny would eliminate poor and mediocre exercises so that what remains is meaningful and solid work.

Veena Das says that the universities, UGC and professional bodies are responsible for such a state of affairs. It is true that quite often outdated textbooks are used in the universities and colleges. Many if not most of the teachers seldom care to know what is happening in the field of sociology. Teachers, even at the highest levels, very rarely refer to national and international journals. "In the case of most

college teachers they look upon themselves mainly as communicators of available knowledge to the students and not as producers of knowledge" (Oommen 1983).

The Indian Association for Study of Population (IASP) conducts periodic reorientation in various parts of India for its members and concerned researchers. Similar reorientation training or workshops for research workers and college teachers in sociology will go a long way in improving the position.

Regarding the evaluation of doctoral theses, it has been mentioned in Das's paper that examination of PhD dissertations is managed within a small coterie of scholars. We are now in a situation when dissertations are approved on the basis of reciprocity rather than the application of academic standards. This does not stop with examination of dissertations. It extends to seminars, workshops and appointments as well. Something drastic has to be done before it is too late.

To conclude, it is necessary to restructure the entire education policy in regard to social science in general and sociology in particular. This should facilitate generating the right kind of teaching and research ethos in which teachers ought to see that students reciprocate by the way of enriching the discipline through the development of aptitude, commitment and academic skills.

The role of established academics becomes significant in such a context. They must continuously inspire and guide young minds and also help in formulating the right kind of policy both with respect to its theoretical dimensions as well as applied aspects. Instead of becoming sceptics they should come forward and do what is possible. Scholars like Veena Das might critically analyse what is going on, but that is not sufficient. She must also become part of an academic community whose aim is to make a sincere attempt to correct the shortcomings in the existing academic scenario.

References

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