The recent report of ‘cut-and-paste’ job done in the case of the question paper set by the Haryana Public Service Commission for the recruitment of college teachers in the subject of English is shocking. After the second attempt at which the candidates were allowed on June 12, they were served with the wrong answer key. That is adding insult to injury, to say the least. It seems the same incompetent hand that first formed the question paper was given the responsibility to prepare the second question paper. If not so, it was indeed a creature of the same species. It is yet to be seen what action is taken against the culprit/s who caused unbearable stress and hardship to thousands of candidates.

Despite the enviable UGC pay scales being given in colleges and universities in Haryana, the fact is that a lot of deadwood exists here. These are the people who hardly have an aptitude of a teacher. They entered the profession because of the lure of the lucre and through questionable route. It is also widely known that in the past, different governments in Haryana were able to recruit aspirants who could pull political strings or grease the palm of the selection committee members. The inflated marks allocated for the interview at the cost of merit during interviews came in handy here.

Even if these incapable teachers were able to enter the profession, they could have honed their capabilities and improved their intellectual calibre. There is a mechanism to give a fillip to such ability through the career advancement scheme that lays store by different activities in academic and related fields. But as it happens so often, there are ways to circumvent rules and such people make an easy mockery of the provisions. For example, a large number of research papers published are
‘cut-and-paste’ jobs and there is a reason to believe that the episode at the centre of this write-up too was the handiwork of one such ‘brilliant’ mind!

What can be done to stem this rot? Had such people been in the private sector, they would have been kicked out, but you can’t in the government or government-aided institutions because of the security of job provision. At best, disincentives are the only way out but then in this rich state, a few care for the loss of a few rupees. Mercifully, the present state government has tried to reverse the trend by doing away with or lowering to a minimum level the marks allotted at interviews. Maybe that will help even though there is a long way to go before the ‘merit’ calculated based on qualifying exams which is also earned, not ‘bought’ or ‘maneuvered’!

Also, there is the need to let merit, and not politics or corrupt practices decide the matter of appointment of heads of colleges and universities. Such appointments, in the past, have been done the way a police post in-charge was appointed. Those who are in the know of things will understand the importance of this analogy. Political considerations are still there but the government finds itself in a cleft stick, for no academic of standing is without his baggage of personal ideological and political beliefs, and if JNU has come to signify one kind of school of thought nurtured by the powers-that-be, another institution will reflect another. It is very difficult to find a scholar who ensures a truly liberal mind, committed to making educational institutions a platform for the free and fearless exchange of ideas.

It is a tricky situation, but there is no denying the fact that unless and until we have a fool-proof apolitical system of placing academic and administrative merit above partisan considerations, the leadership in institutions of learning will go on catering to the whims of their political masters and the down-the-line, the incumbents will continue to be selected on less than meritorious bases, just to echo ‘their master’s voice’.

jagdish batra
@ETHICALPERSPECTIVES
I am a Professor of English and former Head of the department at O.P. Jindal Global University. My area of specialization is Indian English Fiction on which I have...