Newspaper Clips

March 24, 2013

HT Mumbai

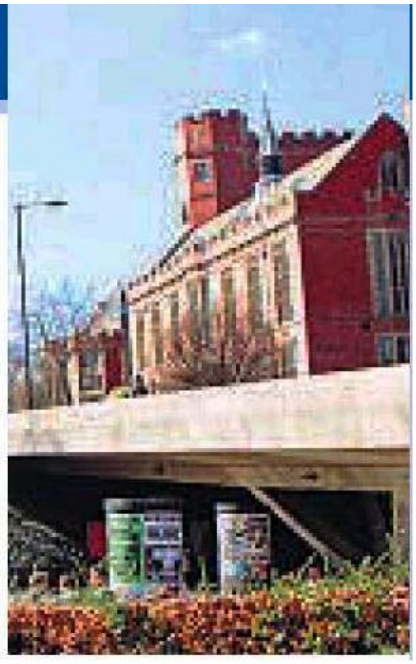
shortstories

Sheffield-IIT Delhi partnership

Sheffield University Management School, UK, has partnered with Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi and Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Kharagpur.

As per this tie-up, the institutions will jointly conduct various research projects.

The universities will be working together with the Indian Institute of Technology (Delhi) and Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, USA for a project titled 'Next Generation Sustainable Freight Transportation'. Sheffield will also be working on analysing carbon trading with IIT Kharagpur.



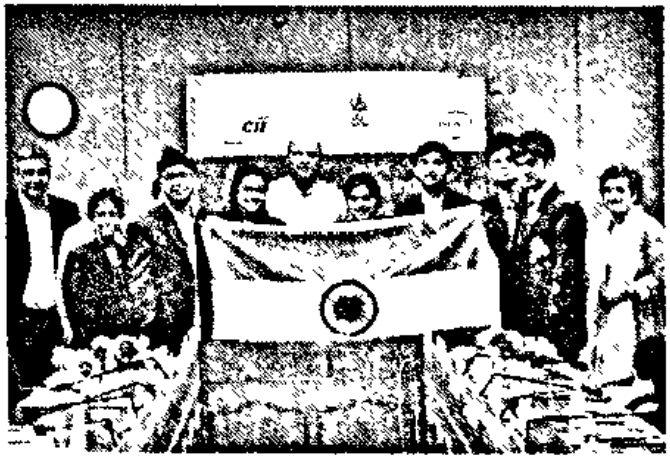
Pioneer, New Delhi, P.13

Indian's top global innovators

The eight Indian students who were declared winners of the India Initiative for Research and Innovation in Science (IRIS) will represent the nation at the 2013 Intel International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF). This fair is going to be held in Phoenix, Arizona from May 12 to 17, 2013. Intel ISEF is a programme run by the Society for Science and the Public (SSP) in partnership with Intel Corporation. The premier global science competition provides an annual forum to pre-college students across the world to display their independent research.

These students will represent India at the world's largest pre-college science fair, and the only global science competition for students in grades 8 to 12. Bringing together more than 1,500 young students from more than 70 countries, Intel ISEF 2013 is an opportunity for the best young minds in the world to come together to share ideas, showcase cutting-edge projects, and compete for more than US $3 million in awards and scholarships.

The winners are selected on basis of their creative ability and scientific thought, as well as the thoroughness, skill, and clarity shown in their projects. Each of the eight students will get an ASUS Fonepad, the world's first Intel Atom Processor based seven inch tablet.



Eight winners of IRIS will represent India at Intel International Science & Engineering Fair, 2013

This year, a total of 2036 IRIS project entries were received from across the country under 10 categories that included a range of solutions in the field of physical and life sciences, mathematics, engineering and social sciences. Of these, 111 projects were showcased at IRIS 2012 held in the Capital last year, six projects by the eight students were shortlisted to represent India at Intel ISEF.

TOI, New Delhi, P.24

India gets first English lifestyle mag in Braille

'White Print' To Roll Out From Next Month

Bella Jaisinghani | TNN

Mumbai: In a scene from Sai Paranjpye's film 'Sparsh', a faculty member at a school for blind children, Shabana Azmi, demands to know of principal Naseeruddin Shah why the institute has not procured a single new book in Braille in the past three years. He, in turn, asks her to determine how many titles have been printed in that period.

Thirty years after the film's release, little has changed. Academic textbooks, audio books and the odd newspaper in Hindi and Marathi are the few resources for visually impaired people. It is only now that a lifestyle magazine in English is becoming available to them.

'White Print', a new monthly out in May, will have sections on food, travel, gadgetry, even politics—everything that sighted people take for granted in the multiple publications that serve them. Where other periodicals have book reviews, this one will review audio books instead.

India gets first English lifestyle mag in Braille, will have

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sections on food, travel, gadgetry, even politics—everything that sighted people take for granted in the multiple publications that serve them. Where other periodicals have book reviews, this one will review audio books instead.

A 24-year-old former public relations executive, Upasana Makati, has developed the monthly by getting journalists to moonlight and sourcing commercials for a segment few advertisers are aware of. Readers are invited to contribute content. The monthly will be printed at the Braille press of the National Association for Blind (NAB) in Worli.

"It helps that NAB has a software to translate English into Braille. I do not have a team of writers or translators. We will find a way to get it to schools and colleges at subsidized rates," Makati says.

NAB director Raman Shankar says printing costs particularly high. "Paper is very expensive. Ours is the only big press in Maharashtra that publishes textbooks. Reading options for the visually impaired are severely restricted owing to high input costs," he says.

Secretary of NAB Joaquim Rapose says they have also printed the Quran in Braille. "A Hindi magazine named Deepshikha is popular. Yet, it is our talking books centre that is the star of the show. Here we have recorded 7,000 titles in 10 languages," he says.

Tribune, New Delhi, P.24

Only 18 out of 100 students passing out of schools enter college every year. This minority, too, suffers from unemployability blues because of an industry-academia disconnect. India's demographic dividend will remain unrealised if steps are not taken to make the 120 million students, who pass out of schools each year, job ready

The Future of **Learning**

ADITI TANDON

DESPITE being the largest in the world in respect of the number of institutions, India's higher education sector enrols less than one-fifth of the potential college-going population. Out of 120 million students who seek entry to colleges and universities annually, only about 25 million manage to make the grades for admissions to 645 degree-awarding institutions, 33,023 colleges affiliated to 174 universities and over 12,748 diploma-granting institutions.

Around 95 million never enter college due to lack of access to colleges, dearth of finances to pay for costly education or simply because of an absence of interest in the conventional education system that hardly trains students for the job market.

Industry associations ASSOCHAM and FICCI have repeatedly warned that India's perceived demographic dividend could turn into a demographic disaster unless the education structures were reformed drastically to train students for the emerging job markets. By 2020, 240 million (double the number today) will seek college education. Contrast these numbers with the fact that as of today, only around five per cent of our graduates are employable, and even they need some amount of training to become industry-ready.

Shift to community college system

Such is the alarm caused by the industry-academia disconnect that Human Resource Development Minister M.M Pallam Raju termed "skilling of students" as his top priority after assuming charge of the portfolio from his predecessor Kapil Sibal last year.

Since then, the government has moved rapidly to find ways to make students more job ready. An ambitious scheme has been drafted to create 300 community colleges, modeled on the North American system, where modular credit-based courses structured to suit specific industry needs would be offered to high school pass outs who don't want to enter the traditional college education system.

Community colleges will provide certificate courses to students after

one year, diplomas or associate degrees after two years, and will retain for seekers the option of moving to the regular degree courses. Already, a National Vocational Curriculum Framework has been framed in consultation with states to allow school students to pursue vocational courses after Class IX. CBSE schools are also offering some vocational courses now and the students opting for these courses will have the flexibility of getting degrees in different vocations once they move to colleges.

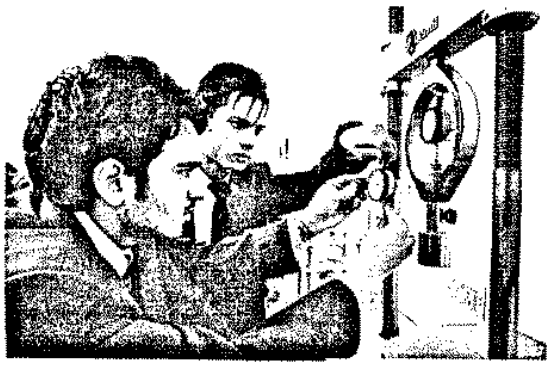
Who's ready for vocational courses?

But the moot point is — are students willing to seek vocational courses and is there enough awareness to boost demand for these? An analysis of the current enrolment structures reveals that Indian students are smitten by degree courses, which lead them to the so-called respectable jobs in engineering, medicine, teaching, business management etc. There is hardly any interest for the new kind of jobs such as those of construction experts, automobile engineers, welding experts and foremen.

Picture this — out of 217.86 lakh students enroled currently in regular courses in central, state or private higher educational institutions, a whopping 84.8 per cent (184.84 lakh) are enroled in degree courses as against just 15.2 pc (33.02 lakh) in vocational diploma courses. While 81.3 lakh additional students joined degree courses between 2007 and 2012 (11th Plan period), only 18 lakh joined diploma courses.

Built increase in India's Gross Enrolment Ratio (number of students entering colleges per 100 passing out of schools annually) over the 12th Plan happened on account of an increased demand for regular, and mainly, degree education.

Total students in colleges	**250** lakh
Students in UG technical courses	**45** lakh
Students in UG general	**116.6** lakh
Students in PG general	**17.3** lakh
Students in PG technical	**5** lakh
Students in regular diplomas	**33** lakh
Students in diplomas in distance mode	**42** lakh
Students enrolled for PhD	**1** lakh



In the Open and Distance Learning mode offered by IGNOU, 13 state open universities and 182 distance education institutions approved by the Distance Education Council, which regulates ODL courses, 42 lakh students (out of the total 250 lakh enroled in higher education), are currently enrolled.

Discipline wise disaggregation of HRD Ministry data further shows meager enrolment in technical courses as against general — out of 250 lakh students in colleges currently, 45 lakh are pursuing UG technical courses as against 116.6 lakh pursuing UG general; 17.3 lakh are enroled in PG general as against 5 lakh in PG technical; 33 lakh are pursuing regular diplomas; 42 lakh are pursuing diplomas in distance mode and only one lakh are enroled for PhD, indicating a severe lack of interest for research.

Students still prefer medicine, engineering, MBA as their top job priorities. Add to that the pressure of parents who make career choices for students and often go for degrees that promise to provide white-collar jobs. Glut in a certain job market is, therefore, natural as against the deficiency in certain other kinds of markets.

Government estimates suggest that by 2022, India will be short of around 103 million skilled workers in the infrastructure sector, 35 million in the automobile industry and 33 million in construction as against 5 million in the technology sector, where the student interest lies as is evident from 14 lakh students who took the just-concluded JEE (Mains) for admission to central technical education institutions.

Clearly, increase in enrolments is not generating for India the kind of jobs it would require to become a global economy. Industries (such as GMR) today run their own courses to train students for jobs while students seek software or mechanical engineering instead of the civil branch. Currently there is a dearth of infrastructure experts as Indian families continue to place a premium on degree education.

So while the government expands its vocational education network and sets up sector skill councils to train students in collaboration with the industry, it must ensure a demand for these skills.

AICTE, which regulates 90 per cent of technical education institutions in India, has recently finalised vocational courses in automobile, IT and entertainment sectors in consultation with the industry experts. It has now invited applications from interested institutions to offer these tailor-made courses to students.

The interest has been lukewarm, though AICTE chief S.S Mantha says it will pick up. The scheme is vital if the government has to fulfil its promise of skilling half a billion Indians by 2022. Bulk of the skilling task is already being managed by the National Skill Development Corporation whose head Dilip Chenoy has often said how Indians prefer degree education as against vocational. The challenge, therefore, is not just to build vocational institutes but also to change student mindset considering one million Indians will enter the workforce annually for the next 20 years and would need the skills to make money.

Venkat Motapatty, head of VKR and VNB Polytechnic College, Gudibada in Krishna district of Andhra Pradesh agrees. A pioneer in vocational training of rural students, Motapatty says, "We select students doing diploma engineering for our tailor-made 500-hour vocational course which includes a component of soft skills for communication. We teach students welding on imported machines where they can actually work".

Quality of vocational courses is, thus, critical. In fact, the 12th Plan Document on Higher Education acknowledges the fact that curriculum in higher educational institutions is irrelevant and needs to be changed.

Limitations of curriculum

Another problem is — 87 per cent students are currently enroled in colleges affiliated to universities. They enrol 80 per cent UG students, 70 per cent PG students and 17 per cent doctoral students, but are obligated to follow the curricula and exam systems determined by the affiliating universities.

Delhi University, for instance, has 80 affiliated colleges, including the top ranking Sri Ram College for Commerce and LSR. But their freedom to improvise courses is limited.

The 12th Plan document agrees, "Higher education sector is plagued by a shortage of well-trained faculty, poor infrastructure and outdated curricula. The use of technology in higher education is limited and the standards of research are so low that none of the Indian universities rank among the top 200 globally. Affiliated colleges that enrol maximum students have barely any academic freedom."

Going ahead, the government plans to focus on these challenges apart from continuing to improve access to higher education.

Target for the 12th Plan is to enhance enrolment capacity by another 10 million by 2017. Of this, the Government says one million will come from open and distance mode; 3.3 million through expansion of skill-based diplomas and 5.7 million from the further expansion of degree programmes. The dream of 30 pc GER by 2020 will be achieved only if this target is met.

Towering challenges

The challenges, however, are huge — more than half (58.9 pc) of the enrolment in higher education today is in the private sector institutions that charge heavily and exclude a vast number of poor students.

Around 128.23 lakh students out of 217 lakh in regular institutions of India are enroled privately as against 44.1 pc (84.99 lakh) in government institutions. In the latter category, bulk enrolment is in state government institutions (38.5 pc), which are reeling under faculty and infrastructure shortage, as against 2.6 pc in the 81 central institutions such as IITs, IIMs, NITs, IIITs, IISERs etc.

Besides, 90 per cent of the technical education sector currently comprises private unaided institutions that have arbitrary fee-charging norms. No wonder then that 21 per cent students interviewed in the last round of the National Sample Survey Organisation said they could not pursue higher education for want of finances.

The government must, therefore, increase investment in technical education to ensure inclusiveness of access. To further enhance affordability of education along side access, enabling loan granting structures would have to be created. At present only 2 per cent of the loan-seeking students in India actually get loans under the Indian Banking Association's ongoing scheme. Reason — banks are unwilling to lend for fear of non-recovery.

The Finance Ministry has now approved the first ever Credit Guarantee Fund for Education to pool the risk of banks and encourage them to lend. Cabinet approval for the scheme is awaited. The move is rooted in evidence that 1.66 lakh crore worth of education loans will have to be extended if the expected 42 million students are to get access to higher education by 2020. Then alone will India's GER touch 30 pc. Today it is a dismal 18 pc, much below the world average of 26. Simply put it means if 100 Indian students pass out of schools every year, only 18 enter colleges.