Newspaper Clips
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August 3

Punjab Kesri ND 03.08.14 P-3

आईआईटी दाखिले में हस्तक्षेप करने से हाईकोर्ट का इन्कार

नई दिल्ली, (वार्ता): दिल्ली उच्च न्यायालय ने आईआईटी तथा एनआईटी में 2014-15 में संयुक्त काउंसिलिंग के आधार पर दाखिले शुरू करने की मांग करने वाली एक जनहित याचिका को खारिज कर दिया है और इन संस्थानों में दाखिले की प्रक्रिया में किसी भी तरह का हस्तक्षेप करने से मना कर दिया है।

उच्च न्यायालय ने प्रो. राजीव कुमार की जनहित याचिका को खारिज करते हुए आईआईटी खड़गपुर की इस दलील को स्वीकार किया है कि मानव संसाधन विकास मंत्रालय द्वारा गठित तकनीकी समिति संयुक्त काउसलिंग के जरिए दाखिले के मामले का अध्ययन कर रही है और यह प्रक्रिया केवल 2015 से ही लागू की जा सकती है। अदालत ने आईआईटी में संपन्न हो चुके दाखिले की प्रक्रिया को इस आधार पर और आगे बढ़ाने से मना कर दिया है कि एनआईटी में दाखिल प्रक्रिया अभी पूरी नहीं हुई है लेकिन अदालत ने सरकार से यह जरूर पूछा है कि क्या दलितों और आदिवासियों के लिए आरक्षित सीटों के नहीं भरने की स्थिति में क्या उन्हें सामान्य श्रेणी में बदला जा सकता है और क्या खाली सीटों को भरने के लिए दूसरे वर्ष में छात्रों को दाखिला दिया जा सकता है।

Hindustan Times ND
03/08/2014 P-10

Delhi HC rejects PIL to delay admissions in IITs

NEW DELHI: The Delhi high court on Friday rejected a petition of Prof. Rajeev Kumar seeking interference with the admission process for academic year 2014-15. In a detailed judgment, the High Court accepted the contention on behalf of IIT Kharagpur that the issue of Common Counseling was being examined by a Technical Committee constituted by MHRD, consisting of representatives of IITs, NITs and NIC and that common seat allocation can be implemented only from 2015.

Hindu ND 03.08.14 P-3

"Resolve issue of common counselling for IITs, NITs"

Mohammed Iqbal

NEW DELHI: The Delhi High Court has directed the Union Human Resource Development Ministry (MHRD) to sort out the issue of common counselling for admissions to Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) and National Institutes of Technology (NITs) from the academic year 2015-16. A technical committee appointed by the Ministry will submit a report in this connection and make suggestions for implementing common counselling.

The issue of seats in IITs and NITs across the country remaining vacant in successive academic sessions was brought to the High Court through public interest litigation by an IIT professor, Rajeev Kumar, who alleged discrepancies, irregularities and arbitrariness in the joint entrance examination conducted by IITs.

A Division Bench comprising Chief Justice G. Rohini and Justice R. S. Endlaw disposed of the writ petition on Friday with directions for common counselling of candidates and consideration of transfer of reserved category seats in IITs, if they remain unfilled, to the general category. The MHRD will take a decision on this aspect and place it before the Court by November 30.

The Court also directed the MHRD and IITs to consider the possibility of provision for lateral entry into IITs in the second year of students from NITs and other engineering colleges. A report on this aspect will also be placed before the Court by November 30.

Dr. Kumar had filed the writ petition in 2010 when he found several discrepancies in IIT-JEE, such as inaccuracies in the cut-off determination, unattended errors in question setting, faculty nexus with coaching, selection of IITs administrators' wards and a closed admission counselling system.

In its 12-page judgment, the Court pulled up IITs and NITs for not addressing the issue of vacant seats, observing that they did not need years to develop a programme for synchronisation of admissions and they could not afford any "red-tapism" in this regard.

"It is rather intriguing to know that the IITs and NITs, which are providing consultancy to others on technical matters, are unable to themselves find a solution for synchronising admissions to eliminate or at least minimise the issue of vacant seats," stated the Bench.

The Court also said that the filling up of vacant seats could not be at the cost of maintaining standards of education and merit in IITs.

Dainik Bhasker ND 03/08/2014

P-1

आईआईटी में खाली रिजर्व सीटें सामान्य वर्ग को दे दें

नई दिल्ली | आईआईटी और एनआईटी में खाली रह गईं रिजर्व सीटें सामान्य वर्ग के छात्रों को दे दी जाएं। दिल्ली हाईकोर्ट ने एक याचिका पर मानव संसाधन मंत्रालय को ऐसा प्रस्ताव दिया है। हाईकोर्ट ने 30 नवंबर तक इस पर रिपोर्ट देने को कहा है।

Scientists launch Right to Research Foundation to promote Indian researchers

PTI | Aug 3, 2014, 01.26 PM IST

http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/home/education/news/Scientists-launch-Right-to-Research-Foundation-to-promote-Indian-researchers/articleshow/39539762.cms

MUMBAI: A group of scientists and academicians have started the Right to Research (R2R) Foundation to support foreign-educated and trained Indian researchers to help them find suitable jobs, upon their return to the country.

"An alarming number of Indian researchers are returning from overseas, after obtaining their MS, PhDs and post doctorate fellowships. And despite their enriched education and training, many of them do not find worthy jobs or do not get engaged in research," Foundation head Dr Jayant Khandare, told PTI.

"At R2R Foundation, this is termed as 'Intelligent Reverse Brain Drain'. Therefore, to engage such researchers, the foundation has been incubated and has started operations near Pune's Hinjewadi Biotech Park," he said.

Some corporates have shown interest in supporting the Foundation, Khandare said, a fellow of the prestigious 'Alexander von Humboldt Experienced Researcher Fellowship' for his research work in Macromolecular Chemistry .

The standard of research training acquired by these scientists is exceptional and is unmatched, he said, adding, "The selection criteria of many domestic academic institutions hold these scientists as 'ineligible', as our peers have their own definitions of excellence."

The Foundation head said hiring of such researchers has been limited in the Indian institutes.

"In recent times, the number of such hirings has been quite limited. India has a dearth of innovation based start-up companies. To obtain government funding for research, there are varied norms and conditions. Therefore, many researchers prefer to return aboard," he said.

"To start with, R2R Foundation has set up dry lab facilities, to engage around 25 researchers. The researchers will be engaged in research thought process across inter-disciplines, and find good avenues in India," he said.

Khandare, who earlier worked with Piramal Life Sciences Limited, is among the researchers called 'Humboldtians', 44 of whom have so far received the Nobel Prize.

The Germany-based Humboldt Foundation promotes academic cooperation between top scientists and scholars from within and outside that country.

All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) makes internship mandatory for engineering students

http://www.dnaindia.com/pune/report-all-india-council-for-technical-education-aicte-makes-internship-mandatory-for-engineering-students-2007302

In order to improve the employability and make the engineering students more industry ready so that when they can venture into the industry, they do not face any skill deficit, the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) has made internship program mandatory for all students from engineering branch in core as well as service industry.

Till date the internship programs were not compulsory for the students, however looking at the skill gap between what is taught in the colleges and what exactly industry requires from the engineering graduates, the regulatory body of technical education in India has decided to make it mandatory for the students.

AICTE Chairman SS Mantha stated in the notification that students in the fifth, sixth and seventh semesters will have to do an internship for anything from three to 24 months so that when they actually boards the shop floor, they will be industry ready.

"The AICTE is coming up with a plan to register external agencies who can liaise with industry to get internships for students so that more and more students can join the firms as interns," he stated.

AICTE has also signed a memorandum of understanding with BSNL to train third and fourth year engineering students in communication and related fields at 43 training centres across the country. The AICTE will pay for the training to the colleges, which will direct the funds to BSNL.

While talking to dna, Dr Anand Bhalerao, the Principal and Dean of Bharati Vidyapeeth's College of Engineering said that it is really a good move and with internship getting mandatory for the students, the students will have chance to experience the professional environment and will have opportunity to attend meetings and events in the indistry.

"By interacting with professionals students will gain new connections and learn how to communicate in a professional environment," he said.

He said that internships provide building blocks graduates need for their future. Many internship opportunities help them set the foundation for their career.

"Students should keep in mind, employers often use internships as a recruitment tool to test out future employees and in many cases, companies hire interns after graduation," he said.

He stated that according to a survey conducted by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), nearly 50 per cent of employers would like to see an internship on a student's resume. An internship can serve as a screening device for employers. Again, according to a NACE survey, nearly 36% of employers hired employees from their own internship program.
"At Bharati Vidyapeeth, we have already made internship mandatory for the students and due to this the employability has been increased," said Dr Bhalerao.

In a first, Narendra Modi government engages students in policymaking

Saturday, 2 August 2014 - 6:10am IST | Place: Mumbai | Agency: DNA
http://www.dnaindia.com/mumbai/report-in-a-first-narendra-modi-government-engages-students-in-policymaking-2007230

In a first of its kind initiative, the central government has decided to engage students (undergrad, postgrad in science, engineering, humanities, social sciences, management, law) in policymaking.

The HRD ministry rolled out a special internship programme early this week that seeks the involvement of young talent to get a fresh perspective on formulation of policies, implementation of projects and various initiatives in the education sector.

The programme named as MHRD Internship Scheme 2014 would provide two months' internships to students (that can be extended up to six months) pursuing undergraduation, postgraduation or reserach.

Journey downhill

Plan	GBS (s. crore)	No of schemes	CSS (₹ cr)	% of CSS t GBS	Central assstance to states & UTs (₹ cr)	% of central assistance to GBS
Ninth Plan (1997-2002)*	316,286	360	99,002	31.3	138,394	43.75
Tenth Plan (2002-07)*	594,649	155	229,763	38.6	203,117	34.15
Eleventh Plan (2007-2012)*	1,588,273	147	660,506	41.6	397,419	25.02

Notes: (*) at constant prices; GBS- Gross Budgetary Support; CSS- Centrally Sponsored Schemes; UT- Union Territory

"The interns would be attached in various bureaus depending on their area of interest. The domains available are technical education (including IITs, IIMs, UGC, AICTE, and research organisations) skill development, deemed universities, distance education, apprentice scheme, school, vocational education etc," said a ministry official.

The scheme aims to seek first-hand information and fresh ideas from the most important stakeholder who has never been consulted in the past though education has always been the pet subject of every government. "Instead of lobbyists we wish to enagage with people to understand their point of view," the official said.

There will be six batches of six people each in the pilot project. The first batch would start work in October-November. Applications for the first three batches will be accepted till August 30. Selected candidates would be paid Rs10,000 a month

No takers for women-only engineering colleges in Tamil Nadu

TNN | Aug 3, 2014, 03.42 AM IST
http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/chennai/No-takers-for-women-only-engineering-colleges-in-Tamil-Nadu/articleshow/39512388.cms
CHENNAI: As society becomes less rigid, gender-specific institutions are seeing a setback, particularly in higher education.

Take, for instance, the enrolment rate in women's engineering colleges in Tamil Nadu. Of the nearly 38,000 women who have sought admission to engineering colleges through the single window counseling this year, very few have sought enrolment in women-only colleges.

Fifteen of the 18 women's engineering colleges in the state have more than 100 seats vacant each, with just two days to go for the end of the general academic counseling process. One college, with a seat intake that can only be termed ambitious at a time when even co-educational engineering institutions with good brand value are not seeing good enrolments, has more than 450 seats vacant. Those in the know said the institutions have been able to secure very few seats, usually in the single digit.

"Even in rural areas, it is only the parents who want their daughters to study in women-only institutions. It does not matter whether the institution is co-educational or exclusive to women. What matters is the quality of the institution and how it has adapted to the times," said educational consultant Moorthy Selvakumaran.

The trend has held steady for the last couple of years. Poor patronage of the colleges, once thought novel, has resulted in some being closed down or converted to co-educational institutions. Over the last five years, the number of women's engineering colleges has decreased by 25%, while the number of women's engineering colleges that have taken part in the single window counseling has dropped from 24 in 2009 to 18 this year.

This, despite the All India Council for Technical Education giving concessions to start women-only technical institutions. AICTE approval process handbook said that while the processing fee of a non-minority co-educational institution is Rs 5 lakh, the fee for a women's engineering college is only Rs 3 lakh. Conversion of a women-only technical institution to a co-educational college or closure of the college will cost another 3 lakh. Still, managements are willing to pay the amount and take up one of the options because they have to fill seats.

Academics say women prefer co-educational institutions because they feel the need to accustom themselves to working alongside the opposite gender.

"We don't want to feel awkward and nervous and waste time getting used to male co-workers when we should be focusing on our career," said Nandini Sivaraman, who lists this among the other reasons she chose a co-educational college to pursue a computer science and engineering degree. She said that if not in the next four years she would never learn to be comfortable around men, because she was an only child with no male cousins and she studied in a girls' school for 12 years.

Aug 03 2014 : The Times of India (Delhi)

UGC rolls out edu aid for transgenders

Hemali.Chhapia @timesgroup.com
Mumbai

As universities across the country open their gates to the third gender, the UGC has decided to include transgenders as a separate category for its various scholarship and fellowship schemes.

The UGC notification follows the April 2014 Supreme Court judgment that carved out an independent status for the third gender. Earlier, they were forced to click on male or female against the gender box. While the council does not have any data on the count of transgender students, officials plan to include them in the annual university census. P 21

Business Standard ND 03/08/2014 P-3

Private universities usher in a wave of big money in education

Jury out on quality, students worry about high fees

APARNA KALRA
New Delhi, 2 August

A luxury bus leaves from Hotel Oberoi in central Delhi for the Rajiv Gandhi Education City near Sonepat on a Sunday. Every seat has a lunch box with cashew, juice, chips, chocolate and biscuits.

Riding the bus is serious entrepreneurial and family money.

Ashish Dhawan, founder of ChrysCapital, holds a mike and tells the story of how he discussed the idea of setting up a university in 2005 with Sanjeev Bikhchandani, founder of naukri.com, a well-established job site. Bikhchandani recounts how the meltdown forced a scaling down of the plan which is now taking shape. Ravi Jhunjhunwala of LNJ Bhilwara leans back on the last seat and discusses the university with his wife. He is soon joined by Puneet Dalmia.

Ashoka University founders and their families are visiting the campus, some for the first time. Together, they have managed to put in ₹200 crore for a liberal arts varsity, signifying a break from tech and business schools and being part of a wave of big money coming into Indian education. Ashoka University will get its first class of undergraduates in August. So will BML Munjal University, started by the Hero Group, the country's largest motorcycle maker.

In Noida, Shiv Nadar University, which gets a grant of ₹250 crore a year from the Shiv Nadar Foundation, set up by information technology czar Nadar, will throw open its MBA programme. A couple of kilometres from Ashoka, looms the impressive edifice of O P Jindal Global University, founded by Naveen Jindal, who runs a ₹20,000-crore steel and power empire.

There is a fresh round of sorely-needed money coming into education, and this time it is not looking for returns. It is clear the funds will make only a blip in the country's gross enrolment ratio of 18 per cent in higher education in 2011-12, which the government is trying to push to 25 per cent by 2016-17. These universities have the advantage of strong job linkages, since their owners have experience of running business empires. They also have scale. Unlike a private college, a university can award a degree, vital to attract undergraduates, and it can offer a number of programmes and disciplines.

Experts, though, question if these shiny campuses will bring with them the one thing Indian education, from school-level to college level, government-run or private, is dubious on – quality. "These universities are yet to come up. They are not known in the world like Harvard or MIT. Quality is not determined by some big man pouring money into a building," scientist and Bharat Ratna recipient C N R Rao told *Business Standard*. He urged Indians not to accept low-quality education and said young graduates were earning money but had stopped applying their minds.

Proactive state govts

The fresh investment in universities shows some states have been smart enough to change their laws to attract private funds into education. After a long period of government control in higher education in the form of central and state universities, private universities such as Amity, with a mini Singapore-like campus, burst on the scene because states such as Haryana and Uttar Pradesh (UP) enacted laws to allow private universities to start without central government approval. Education in India is a concurrent subject, which both central and state governments can tackle.

The Haryana Private Universities Act, 2006, ushered in the O P Jindal University in 2009. The government simply amends the Act to let in a new university, and till 2014 had allowed in 17 universities, the last three being Ashoka, B M Munjal and Al-Falah.

Uttar Pradesh, similarly, established Amity University by a state law. Later, Sharda University and Galgotias University were let in through similar laws, enacted in 2009 and 2011, respectively, copies of which are on the universities' websites.

Punjab, Rajasthan and Karnataka are other states actively encouraging private universities. The first two gain from the advantage of locations such as Gurgaon (Haryana), Sonepat (Haryana), or Noida (Uttar Pradesh) with their proximity to Delhi, which brings in students, and the one-stop shop of permissions that hubs such as the Rajiv Gandhi Education City offer. Manoj P, associated with the Azim Premji University in Bangalore since its start, enabled by the Azim Premji University Act, 2010, said the Karnataka government has since then allowed in eight-nine private universities.

Impact

"You have the greatest impact (on society). That's what you want to do," said Ajit Rangnekar, dean of the Indian School of Business or ISB in Hyderabad, a privately-run business school co-founded with Rajat Gupta in 2001, which is looking to become a university. ISB, whose main campus falls in the recently created state of Telangana, said it would offer multi-disciplinary courses and take in undergraduates if made into a university.

ISB has roughly 760 post-graduate students of business administration in its Hyderabad and Mohali campuses. Four founder supporters of ISB, Analjit Singh of Max India, Rakesh Bharti Mittal of Bharti Enterprises, Sunil Kant Munjal of the Hero Group, and Atul Punj of the Punj Lloyd Group, invested ₹50 crore each in the Mohali campus which started in 2012.

While the Punjab government has offered ISB university status, Dean Rangnekar is hesitant as it leaves out its Hyderabad campus where the parent state, he says, may not have a private varsity law. Rangnekar wants a national law on private universities that allow multi-campus institutes to become universities. ISB offers a post-graduate diploma, and not degrees, in management to its students, just the way the Indian Institutes of Management or IIMs do.

Though the private universities fill a need, the high cost of being a student there is a matter of much discussion online among aspirants. The Jindal Law School, for instance, charges ₹6.75 lakh fees per year, including hostel charges, for a five-year BA LLB course; in sharp contrast to the National Law School of India University, Bangalore, which charges ₹1.76 lakh per year, including residence, for the same course.

"While in the US it might be possible to get a loan and couple the effort with previous savings and workings during the law school study to afford the fees, how does one expect a person with average Indian income to pay the exorbitant fees at JGLS (Jindal Global Law School)? Great effort but I would still go to a National Law University," said Sandipan De, commenting in Bar & Bench, an online platform for the legal community.

Deans of the universities say they are generous in offering scholarships. A Jindal Law School student assured De, for instance, that it is possible to get a full fee waiver. At Ashoka, where the undergraduate course costs ₹3.9 lakh per year, 60 per cent students will get 20 per cent to full fee waiver.

A reason a large-investment university is considered viable is because attracting good faculty has long been a struggle, as India does not produce enough research scholars to fill faculty positions. Universities backed by deep pockets can hunt globally for teachers. Ashoka University, for instance, has a British teacher for Sanskrit; Dean of academics, Jonathan Gil Harris, a scholar of Shakespeare and a fan of Vishal Bhardwaj, has taught English at the George Washington University.

Related story: http://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/private-universities-add-verve-to-syllabi-impress-recruiters-114060401125_1.html

PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES BACKED BY BIG BUSINESS

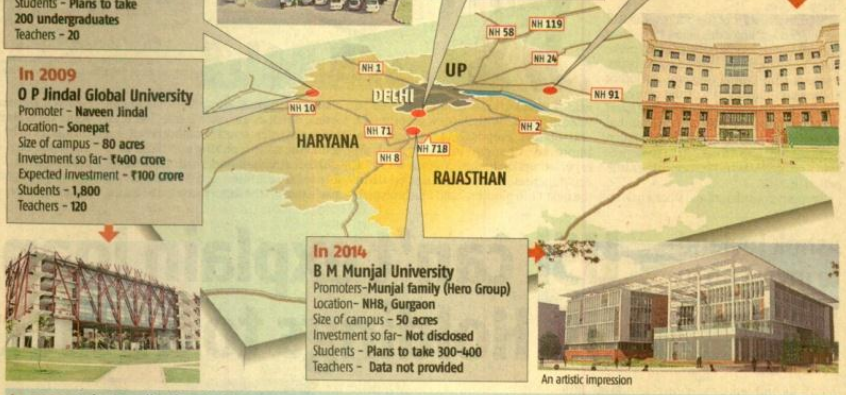
Big corporate groups have put in the latest round of investment in universities, bringing sorely needed funds. These private universities have been made possible by laws enacted by smart state governments. Experts, though, worry about quality at these universities, and high fees.

In 2014
Ashoka University
(fellowship launched earlier)
Promoters–**Jaithirth Rao, Ashish Dhawan, Pramath Sinha and others**
Location– **Sonepat**
Size of campus – **25 acres**
Investment so far– **₹200 crore**
Expected investment – **₹300 crore** (to be raised)
Students – **Plans to take 200 undergraduates**
Teachers – **20**

In 2012
Ansal University
Promoter–**Sushil Ansal**
Location– **Gurgaon**
Size of campus – **15 acres**
Investment so far– **₹10 crore ***
Expected investment – **₹100 crore**
Students – **2,500**
Teachers – **125**

In 2011
Shiv Nadar University
Promoter –**Shiv Nadar Foundation**
Location– **Greater Noida**
Size of campus – **288 acres**
Investment so far– **₹776 crore**
Students – **967**
Teachers – **151**

In 2009
O P Jindal Global University
Promoter – **Naveen Jindal**
Location– **Sonepat**
Size of campus – **80 acres**
Investment so far– **₹400 crore**
Expected investment – **₹100 crore**
Students – **1,800**
Teachers – **120**



In 2014
B M Munjal University
Promoters–**Munjal family (Hero Group)**
Location– **NH8, Gurgaon**
Size of campus – **50 acres**
Investment so far– **Not disclosed**
Students – **Plans to take 300-400**
Teachers – **Data not provided**

An artistic impression

In 2009 Azim Premji University**
Promoter–**Azim Premji Foundation,** Location– **Bangalore,** Size of campus – **Currently leased, new campus 100 acres,** Investment so far– **Not disclosed**
Students – **600,** Teachers – **110**

*Used to modernise facilities, the university subsumed the Sushant School of Art & Architecture **Offers only post-graduate courses; plans to offer undergraduate education
Source: Vice-chancellors and, in a few cases, corporate communication teams of the universities

Business Standard
ND 03/08/2014 P-2

Skill injection needed for demographic dividend: President

BS REPORTER
Kolkata, 2 August

Reaping our 'demographic dividend' needs injecting of skills in the Indian workforce, President Pranab Mukherjee said on Saturday.

He said physical infrastructure, health and education were areas of concern for the economy. Reforms were a continuing process and "cannot be stopped", he said, though there might be pauses or change of pace.

Addressing the 86th annual general meeting of the Indian Chamber of Commerce here, Mukherjee said allocation for spending on health had increased and physical expansion in education had taken place.

"We have 735 degree-giving universities, 35,000 colleges 16 IITs, 30 NITs and a number of institutes of management and also of high research and development in size. But, is also a fact that a large number of people are unskilled," Mukherjee said.

"More than often we use the phrase that we are going to have a demographic dividend because by 2030, 54 per cent of the population will (still) be in the working age group. (But) this huge number of workforces, if they are to be provided suitable employment and their employability is to be increased, need skills," he added.

August 4

Economic Times ND 4/08/2014 P-18

Panel Set Up to Prepare UGC Recast Plan

URMI A GOSWAMI
NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Human Resource Development has set up a committee headed by former University Grants Commission Chairman Hari Gautam to provide a blueprint for restructuring the higher education regulator as it addresses challenges of a growing sector.

ET had reported on June 3 that HRD Minister Smriti Irani had made restructuring and revamping of the UGC one of her top priorities and that the ministry was doing the required spadework for it. Irani's focus is in keeping with the BJP's poll promise of restructuring the body to transform it into a Higher Education Commission. The transformation will be effected by amending the UGC Act.

The higher education sector in India has emerged as one of the largest in the world in terms of number of institutions and the second largest by number of students with nearly 28 million students in 726 universities and about 38,000 colleges. The gross enrolment ratio in 2011-12 was 20.4%, which included students studying through the distance mode.

Besides Hari Gautam, the members of the committee are CM Jariwala, former head and dean of law at Banaras Hindu University; Kapil Kapoor, former pro-vice chancellor of Jawaharlal Nehru University and the joint secretary of higher education in the ministry who is the member secretary of the committee.

The committee will evaluate the performance of the UGC in coordinating and determining standards of education in universities, conducting an audit of its regulatory reach and identifying its strengths and weaknesses. The evaluation will also be conducted at the level of the UGC's regional offices and the inter university centres.

The relationship and the functioning of the UGC vis-a-vis other regulatory authorities like the All India Council for Technical Education and National Council for Teacher Education in the higher education sector will also be looked at. A similar assessment will be made of the regulatory space that the UGC has.

There is a sense that the regulatory functions of the UGC have taken a back seat when compared with its grant-giving exercise. The committee will recommend changes to ensure that there is a balance between the two. Transparency in functioning, revamping the grant-disbursing function to introduce effectiveness and efficiency for timely utilisation of grants and the introduction of performance-based system of release of funds in line with the Rashtriya Ucchatar Shiksha Abhiyan are other aspects the committee will look at.

The commission's grants-disbursal functions have been rather limited, as not all universities and colleges, particularly those set up by states, are eligible for UGC grants. "The government's scheme to augment universities and colleges in the state sector, Rashtriya Ucchatar Shiksha Abhiyan, has dented the importance of the UGC's grant disbursal function," an official said.

The growth of the sector with private players and the possible entry of foreign education institutions have meant that the UGC would need to expand its regulatory functions. The commission was formally set up by an Act of Parliament in 1956, and is the statutory body for the coordination, determination and maintenance of standards of university education in the country. However, it had already been in existence since 1952 at which time the function of allocating public funds to central universities and other universities was entrusted to the UGC. Over the years, despite the changes in the higher education sector, the Commission's emphasis has continued to be on its grant-disbursal functions.

Hindu ND 4/08/2014 P-10

Panel set up to restructure UGC

Anita Joshua

NEW DELHI: Finding the University Grants Commission (UGC) ill-equipped to address the challenges posed by the manifold increase in the number of universities — particularly private universities and deemed-to-be-universities — the Human Resource Development (HRD) Ministry has set up a committee to restructure the apex regulatory body for higher education in the country.

The four-member committee will be headed by former UGC chairman Hari Gautam and will have as its members C.M. Jariwala (former head and dean of law at Banaras Hindu University), Kapil Kapoor (former pro vice-chancellor of Jawaharlal Nehru University) and the Joint Secretary in the Higher Education in the ministry as its members.

The HRD Ministry order said there is a realisation that the UGC is not able to do justice to its mandate in light of "massification" of higher education. "Faced with the fact that a lot of private institutions have come up in higher education sector and the growing trend of commercialisation of higher education, several States having created private universities which sometimes are not maintaining the laid down standards of higher education, the UGC's entire functioning continues to be oriented more towards grant giving rather than regulation and enforcement of minimum standards."

This, according to the Ministry, called for an urgent review of the UGC in its entirety. As per the last count, India has 28 million students in 726 universities and 38,000 colleges.

Economic Times ND 4/08/2014 P-18

Foreigners Eager to Learn Hindi to Connect With India

Experts say communicating in a country's language also shows one's intention to engage on social, political and business fronts

VIJAYA RATHORE
NEW DELHI

While India debates the new government's plan to tweet in Hindi and civil service aspirants take to the streets in protest against a test of English-language skills being included in the exam, foreigners are increasingly seeking to speak the local language to woo Indians.

US secretary of state John Kerry invoked Prime Minister Narendra Modi's election tagline 'Sabka saath sabka vikas' at a Washington think-tank meeting before his India visit last week. While this may have been good diplomacy, investors and brand marketers are also trying to convey a greater cultural affinity.

David Wax, director of US-based private equity investment firm WL Ross, has come to India several times in the past to discuss business deals. For his latest visit last week, Wax got his business cards printed in Hindi on one side. Wax, who is looking to invest in distressed companies in India, said it was a small but meaningful gesture. "The purpose was to show respect and cultural sensitivity to the Indian recipient," said Wax.

German airline Lufthansa's TV commercial attempts to connect better with the Indian flier. The company has created an advertisement only for India for the first time, trying to shed the image of being cold and unemotional by showing Indian food and movies on board flights.

"As a brand we have been in India for a long time... but this time we wanted to make an emotional connect," said Sangeeta Sharma, manager, marketing and communication, Lufthansa. In Delhi, several embassies have enrolled staff for Hindi classes. Apart from such students, institutes also see good demand from researchers at companies seeking to learn the language. After the Modi government took over, visitors from the West and even countries such as China, Japan and South Korea have started talking about the growing importance of Hindi in India, according to Chandra Bhushan Pandey, founder of Hindi-Guru Language Institute.

Lufthansa creates an ad only for India for the first time by showing Indian food and movies on board flights

"Many Chinese have called me recently to say they want to do advanced courses in Hindi as it would help them in conducting business and diplomatic relations better," said Pandey, who is currently teaching people who work at companies such as Mitsubishi and Mitsui.

"I see lot of enquiries coming in once the summers are over and people are back from their holidays." Experts point out that communicating in a country's language or respecting the culture is a way to show not just friendliness, but also the intention to engage on social, political and business fronts.

"It's important to connect with the locals rather than maintaining an international identity," said professor Abraham Koshy of the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad.

So when the German Tourism Board releases promotional material in close to 10 Indian languages and five-star hotels such as those run by the Starwood group go the extra mile to make sure that they offer slippers and masala chai to Indians guests at their international properties, one knows what's going on.

Tribune ND 4/08/2014 P-8

Needless protest

It should not be allowed to dilute UPSC standards

FOR candidates aspiring to be the future administrators of the country, it's imperative to have an aptitude for decision-making and analysing issues at hand. Therefore, the three-member Arvind Varma Committee, that has recommended the status quo on the issue of CSAT (Civil Services Aptitude Test), conducted by the UPSC (Union Public Service Commission), terming it to be a "scientifically approached" paper, has reinforced the need for aptitude apart from a sound knowledge base. The report has put the issue of the alleged step-motherly treatment given to the Hindi-speaking candidates at rest, at least for the time being. Scores of civil services aspirants have been protesting against the CSAT, alleging that it favoured the English-medium contestants with a technical background.

Their protest, taken over by political parties of different shades, turned the basic requirement of a sound aptitude test for positions of responsibility into a Hindi-versus-English row that rocked both Houses of Parliament on Friday. Instead of burning public property to express their anger, the candidates must understand that by acquiring proficiency in a global language, they would not undermine the value of their mother-tongue. It only adds to one's competence in an environment that is growing global in aspirations. Why does a future administrator of a country, where the common man aspires to send his children to an English-medium school, should not have a working knowledge of the language, the protesting candidates should be asked. The UPSC is not testing something out of context.

At the same time, the UPSC should not use Google, which dilutes the accuracy of translation from English into Hindi. The culture of treating issues of competence with kid gloves, on the pretext of language or regional politics, does not set a good precedent. At some point the experts' verdict needs to be respected. Here the issue that largely affects the candidates is that of scale, the scale of elimination. Selection is going to be tough for five-six lakh candidates aspiring for a thousand odd seats. English is not the real issue.

Job portal for engineering graduates

Himanshu Nitnaware,TNN | Aug 4, 2014, 04.44 AM IST

http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/pune/Job-portal-for-engineering-graduates/articleshow/39582600.cms

NASHIK: With the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) starting an online portal for students seeking jobs, engineering graduates will no longer have to rely entirely on colleges for their placements after completing studies.

The portal is also open for companies to enlist themselves looking to recruit fresh candidates. Students across the country would be able to seek jobs with the help of this portal.

An official at the joint directorate of technical education (DTE) said that students are inclined towards specific branches in traditional engineering courses. In spite of having opportunities in other branches, employers are not able to reach potential candidates; hence the need for a job portal.

The apex body for technical education will act as a facilitator in providing a platform to job seekers as well as recruiters via this online job portal.

To register on the portal, a company will have to create a company profile. Students' profiles will be seen in the 'Company Search Result' tab through which the company can shortlist candidates by selecting profiles of its interest.

Students have to register themselves on www.aicte-india.org. After registration, he has to avail the student ID after submitting information about his state, institute ID, personal details, roll no. and date of birth.

Each student will be able to apply for maximum five jobs at a time.

IIT-Kharagpur working on national digital library

http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/kolkata/iitkharagpur-working-on-national-digital-library/article6279380.ece

Seeking to create a national online educational asset for students interested in research and innovation, the IIT Kharagpur, recently put forth a proposal to form a NDL to the Ministry of Human Resource Development.

Seeking to create a national online educational asset for students interested in research and innovation, the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Kharagpur, recently put forth a proposal to form a National Digital Library (NDL) to the Ministry of Human Resource Development.

The MHRD not only approved of the project, but also granted Rs. 100 crore for the project to be kick-started by the IIT Kharagpur, one of the premier tech institutes in the country. This was announced by institute's director Partha Pratim Chakrabari at the 60th convocation ceremony in July-end.

Talking to *The Hindu* over phone, one of the core team members who ideated the NDL Partha Pratim Das said the project's main aim was to create a knowledge base for students of all ages, especially for those interested in research.

“Every university has its own digital archive of its intellectual output and syllabus, known as the Institutional Digital Repository (IDR), whose access is limited to the university’s own staff and students. The NDL is modelled on the IDR, but will consist of IDRs of several universities and any student will be free to access it. For instance, a student of IIT Madras will be able to access study material of a specialisation taught exclusively at IIT Kharagpur. The NDL aims to streamline IDRs and other study material into one common online,” Prof. Das, also a professor of the computer and engineering department, said.

Except for copyrighted content, the data will mostly be available for free.

While the NDL is a relatively new concept in India, it has already made its appearance in most universities in the west. The content for the NDL will be derived from institutes of all types of specialisations and will include school-level study material as well.

The multi-faceted project would start by incorporating digital content of about 50 institutions at the primary level, keeping the next target at about 100 institutions.

Another focus of the project is to create e-content, comprising video lectures, interactive questions and answers and books, in multiple languages.

Stating that ‘a lot of activity is planned in vernaculars’, Prof. Das said: “Initially, the knowledge base will be created in English. We will gradually include vernaculars and create a multi-lingual interface so that students from across India can freely access it without facing a language barrier,” Prof. Das said.

The brainchild of a four-member team will be launched in 18-21 months and a prototype will soon be launched to test the project’s feasibility. About 100 courses will be launched at a preliminary level.

Headed by Prof. Chakrabarti, the proposal was worked on by professor in charge of the institute’s central library Subrata Chattopadhyay, professor of the computer and engineering department Sudeshna Sarkar and librarian of the central library B. Sutradhar along with Prof. Das.

Keeping in mind the evolving technology, plans are on to make the interface available across all platforms — cell phones, tablets and laptops. Content will also be developed keeping in mind the needs of differently-abled students.

From US to village India: IITian promotes rural innovation

IANS | Bangalore
August 4, 2014 Last Updated at 08:54 IST
http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ians/from-us-to-village-india-iitian-promotes-rural-innovation-114080400211_1.html

An IIT-Kanpur alumnus did something unusual on returning to India in the 1980s with a PhD degree from the US - shunning a lucrative career with a multinational to use his knowledge to develop technologies to solve problems faced by villagers. He now shares his experiences in an e-book, intended to inspire youth to follow his path.

Anil K. Rajvanshi joined the Nimbkar Agricultural Research Institute (NARI), an NGO working in Maharashtra's Phaltan, after returning to India in 1981. NARI's work has been extensively written about and Rajvanshi is winner of several awards including the Distinguished Alumnus Award from the University of Florida where he did his PhD. His just released e-book "Romance of Innovation" documents the pleasures and pains of doing research in rural India.

Rajvanshi said the e-book presents a brief history of renewable energy work carried out at NARI since 1981. Each of its six chapters, ends with a list of ideas useful for people who are planning to develop a career in research and development (R&D) for rural areas, while the last gives a roadmap for the future development of rural India

On NARI's accomplishments, he said it has "done pioneering work in all aspects of renewable energy affecting the lives of rural population like alcohol production from sweet sorghum; development of electric cycle rickshaws; biomass gasification; and production of the unique device -- 'lanstove' -- that simultaneously acts as a cook-stove and a 300-watt lamp".

"All our rural products exploit sophisticated technology and are not the result of tinkering here and there," Rajvanshi told IANS.

Rajvanshi said the aim of the book is to inspire youngsters to enter the field of rural innovation.

"It provides them a whole list of challenging ideas for research and development (R&D) to uplift rural life. The book also shows that very meaningful and satisfying R&D work can be done with meagre resources and fewer people in a small rural setting," he said.

"I hope it will provide inspiration to other NGOs who want to do a similar type of work," he said, adding the remarkable achievement by NARI in the face of tremendous adversity is an indication that it is possible to make progress in rural India if a large number of youngsters follow the path shown by NARI.

On why he did not make your book a priced publication, Rajvanshi said there is a "tremendous need to inspire and get bright young engineers for rural R&D" and he felt making the book available free may help in this effort.

Times of India ND 4/08/2014 (EDUACTION TIMES)P-1

SUBJECT WISE

TECH PROMISE

Owing to the myriad job opportunities it leads to, a Bachelor's degree in engineering remains a promising option

Rahat.Bano
@timesgroup.com

An engineering degree continues to be a favourite among students even amidst an uncertain job market. For, it gears graduates towards promising careers in and beyond the tech sphere in the domestic as well as global arena.

GRAPHIC: DEBASISH SARMA

THE TREND

While branches like computer science, civil, mechanical, electrical and chemical engineering continue to attract students at institutions such as the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), National Institutes of Technology (NITs) and other well-known universities, according to experts, fields like materials engineering, too, are gaining in popularity.

Elaborates Bhaskar Ramamurthi, director, IIT, Madras, "To the discerning, branches including aerospace engineering, chemical engineering, and materials engineering, where the numbers are smaller, too, are attractive, since the opportunities are tremendous."

Besides, major engineering institutions have added new features to their engineering programmes over the past decade. In a bid to provide learners interdisciplinary knowledge, they have embraced biology, materials, systems engineering, modelling and simulation as also environmental science and engineering, and sustainability, says GD Yadav, vice-chancellor, Institute of Chemical Technology (ICT), Mumbai. "Undergraduate programmes in biotechnology are not yet viable in India since the industry has not yet matured. However, the Master's and PhD programmes in this discipline are reasonably job-oriented," adds Yadav.

Against this backdrop, it is vital for aspirants to be clear about their reasons for training in this field so that they do not flounder and get disappointed during the programme or later, in their careers. The thumb rule, as in any other stream, is to match one's interest and abilities to the requirements of the programme and consequent careers.

"Many students enrol in engineering courses because of societal expectations, and not due to their aptitude. Aspirants should keep in mind that they should opt for a course in this field only if they are genuinely interested in the study of the subject," advises PJ Narayanan, professor and director, International Institute of Information Technology, Hyderabad.

Also, good engineering credentials have indeed launched many engineers to some of the most coveted posts in multinationals around the world, yet hopefuls should not pick this stream with misleading notions. "Students should stop viewing engineering degrees as passports to high-paying jobs in a few top companies. The number of such jobs is not large," informs Ramamurthi. "However, if they choose to energetically learn not only the chosen discipline, but keep their eyes and ears open to widen their knowledge about design, business, ethics, and so on, they will be equipping themselves to grab the big opportunity that fortune will throw their way sooner or later."

THE AVENUES

Though the job market has been tight of late, new possibilities have opened with different kinds of support for entrepreneurs and innovators in the public and private sector.

"India is growing, and let's hope the pace will go back to what it was till a few years ago," says Ramamurthi. If this happens, engineers will have numerous opportunities in infrastructure, advanced manufacturing, telecom and IT, materials, chemical and petroleum engineering, aerospace, etc, he says. In addition, the country's myriad social, economic and infrastructural issues provide enough room for enterprising graduates to create new business.

"Probably no other country provides the kind of opportunity for innovating through start-ups to address challenges in energy, water, housing, healthcare, transportation and education as much as India. The concept of smart cities captures all these under one umbrella. There is no reason these sectors cannot have billion-dollar companies that completely change the way we provide these to our citizens. India-specific modernisation in agriculture, dairy farming, etc, is another big opportunity waiting to be grabbed," concludes Ramamurthi.

INSTITUTE INDICATOR

- Indian Institutes of Technology,* multiple locations
- National Institutes of Technology, multiple locations
- Indian Institutes of Information Technology, multiple locations
- Birla Institute of Technology and Science, Pilani
- Delhi Technological University

(Indicative listing)

HT.COM ND 4/8/2014 P-6

Google favourite employer among Asia-Pacific graduates

Google has emerged as the most desirable employer among business and IT students FILE

Press Trust of India

Internet giant Google is the most attractive employer for graduates from the Asia-Pacific region in a list of top companies which figures no Indian firm.

According to global employer branding firm Universum's 2014 Most Attractive Employers in Asia Pacific Ranking, Google has emerged as the most desirable employer among business, as well as engineering and IT students in the APAC region.

Google is followed by Deloitte, Citi, Apple and P&G in the top-five firms for business students. Among engineering and IT students, Google is followed by Apple, Microsoft, Samsung and BMW. The list has 50 companies each for the two categories, but no India company figures in either of the lists, although a number of these companies have significant headcount in India.

Interestingly, the latest Fortune Global 500 list has eight Indian companies including state-run IOC which was featured in the top 100 at the 96th position.

Besides, Deloitte, the other three major accounting firms were also placed among the Top 10. KPMG was ranked sixth, PwC seventh and Ernst & Young eighth.

The popularity of banks and professional service firms among APAC graduates were also visible in the rankings as these firms took 11 of the top 20 employer positions.

The FMCG sector also had significant presence in the list as the four key players featured include P&G ranked fifth, Unilever 14th, Nestle 16th and the L'Oreal Group 20th.

While Google continues to dominate the rankings as the top employer for engineering/IT students, Samsung is a close competitor in Asia Pacific. On the other hand, former communications and IT giant, Nokia, continues to fall in the rankings at 32nd place this year.

The survey revealed that high future earnings' is a top priority across Asia Pacific for both management /commerce students and engineering/natural science students.

Times of India ND 4/08/2014 (EDUCATION TIMES) P-5

STUDENTSPEAK

RISHAB MEHRA
> Undergraduate in computer science, Stanford University, US

VALLEY DREAMS

Throughout my school life, I have aimed to give my best to everything I do, be it studies or co-curricular activities. I managed to get the top score in my school while swimming six hours a day, developed apps for the Apple app store in class VIII, became the head boy, and went for international taekwondo and national athletics events, among others.

After class X, I was confused whether to study in India or go abroad. I did my homework, shortlisted institutions and visited a few in the US in the summer break. The freedom on campus, the admission process which filtered all-round individuals in rather than those who do well in a single exam, the professor-student relationship, the research opportunities and the college environment captivated me. My mother still wanted me to go to an Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) as it was the best, according to her, but I decided to go to the world's best to study. I was convinced that the US is the place where I wish to study. I gave up my IIT prep training, and spent more time on US college requirements. Since then, there has been no looking back.

Rishab Mehra

I was overwhelmed by the acceptance of colleges. I had been accepted to well-known universities – Stanford, Yale, Wharton, Dartmouth, Carnegie Mellon University, University of California – Berkeley, Duke, UC – Los Angeles and Georgia Tech. I was in a dilemma as to whether to choose Yale, Stanford or Wharton, so I decided to visit them for the admit weekends, when admitted students live on campus to get a feel of the place.

> I was in a dilemma as to whether to choose Yale, Stanford or Wharton, so I decided to visit them for the admit weekends, when admitted students live on campus to get a feel of it

Stanford, in my view, had many advantages over the others. It ranked number one in computer science. Its students win Olympics, have top apps on the app store and internet in general – Snapchat, Yahoo and Google were created there, after all – and its professors include Nobel laureates. It is in the heart of Silicon Valley, where I wanted to be. I will do my Bachelor's either with a double major in computer science and maths or complete my undergraduate and postgraduate programmes through co-terming in computer science.

I intend to start companies at college and if one of them works out, I will definitely go on with it. Otherwise, I will apply for a PhD in computer science or work with a reputable company. Whatever I do, my final aim is to continue my software career, write codes and create revolutionary technology to make this world a better place to live in.

– As told to **Aaditi Isaac**

Times Of India ND 04/08/2014 P-13

Comet-chaser nears prey after 6bn-km quest

Launched A Decade Ago, Rosetta Spacecraft Set For Rendezvous With Its Target On Wed

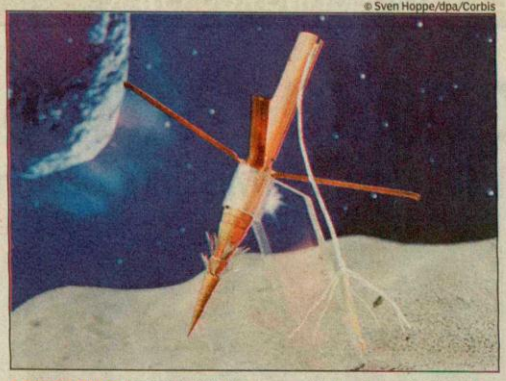
Paris: After a decade-long quest spanning six billion kilometres (3.75 billion miles), a European probe will come face to face on Wednesday with a comet, one of the solar system's enigmatic wanderers.

The moment will mark a key phase of the most ambitious project ever undertaken by the European Space Agency (ESA)—a 1.3 billion euro ($1.76 billion) bid to get to know these timeless space rovers.

More than 400 million km from where it was launched in March 2004, the spacecraft Rosetta will finally meet up with its prey, Comet 67P/Churyumov-Gerasimenko.

To get there, Rosetta has had to make four flybys of Mars and Earth, using their gravitational force as a slingshot to build up speed, and then entering a 31-month hibernation as light from the distant Sun became too weak for its solar panels.

© Sven Hoppe/dpa/Corbis



COSMIC HUNT: A model of the harpoon on the landing unit Philae is on display at the German Aerospace Centre in Wessling. A part of Rosetta, Philae is expected to land on the comet '67P/Churyumov-Gerasimenko' in November and will be anchored to it by using the harpoon

It was awakened in January. After braking manoeuvres, the three-tonne craft should on Wednesday be about 100 km from the comet – a navigational feat that, if all goes well, will be followed by glittering scientific rewards.

"It's taken more than 10 years to get here," said Sylvain Lodiot, spacecraft operations manager. "Now we have to learn how to dock with the comet, and stay with it for the months ahead."

Blazing across the sky as they loop around the Sun, comets have long been considered portents of wonderful or terrible events – the birth and death of kings, bountiful harvests or famines, floods or earthquakes.

Astrophysicists, though, see them rather differently. Comets, they believe, are clusters of the oldest dust and ice in the solar system – the rubble left from the formation of the planets 4.6 billion years ago. These so-called dirty snowballs could be the key to understanding how the planets coalesced after the Sun flared into life, say some.

Indeed, one theory – the "pan-spermia" hypothesis – is that comets, by bombarding the fledgling Earth, helped kickstart life here by bringing water and organic molecules.

On November 11, the plan is for Rosetta to inch to within a few kilometres of the comet to send down a 100-kilogramme (220-pound) refrigerator-sized robot laboratory, Philae. Anchored to the surface, Philae will carry out experiments in cometary chemistry and texture for up to six months. After the lander expires, Rosetta will accompany "C-G" as it passes around the Sun and heads out towards the orbit of Jupiter.

Before November's landing, though, Rosetta's operators have a mountain of work to do.

The first few weeks will be a get-to-know-you exercise, as the spacecraft gingerly carries out elongated loops around the comet, scanning its surface.

The probe will have to avoid ice crystals and dust particles that are stripped from the comet's outer layers as it nears the Sun – a trail that is reflected in solar rays.

And it will have to look for a suitable landing site for Philae. Last month, as Rosetta came ever closer to the comet, its cameras revealed that the target body, far from being shaped like a potato as many had expected, rather resembled a duck – two lobes, one big and the other small, connected by a "neck". AFP

Times Of India ND 04/08/2014 P-13

Ants hold key to fighting global warming?

New York: Ants may be cooling the Earth by helping trap carbon dioxide from the environment, a new study has claimed.

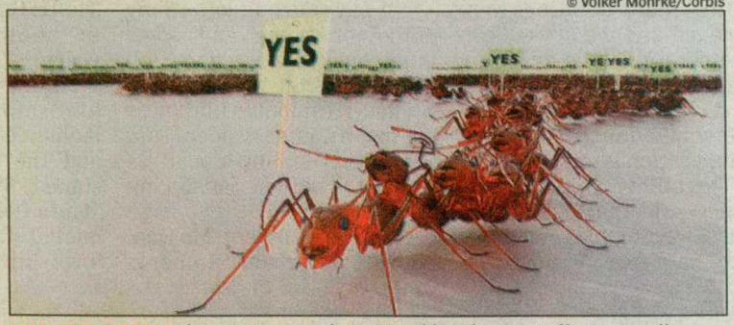
A long-term experiment tracking the ants' effects on soil suggests they cooled Earth's climate as their numbers grew.

"Ants are changing the environment," said lead study author Ronald Dorn from the Arizona State University in Tempe.

Certain ant species "weather" minerals in order to secrete calcium carbonate— better known as limestone. The process traps and removes a tiny bit of carbon dioxide gas from the atmosphere, Dorn said.

This ant limestone factory is a small-scale version of the massive planetary-cooling process that takes place in the oceans, known as carbon sequestration, 'Live Science' reported.

© Volker Möhrke/Corbis



YES, THEY CAN: A long-term experiment tracking the ants' effects on soil suggests they cooled Earth's climate by trapping carbon dioxide

Dorn discovered that ants were powerful weathering agents by tracking the breakdown of basalt sand. His experiment shows that ants appear to break down the minerals 50 to 300 times faster than sand left undisturbed on bare ground.

According to Dorn, the ants may be scavenging calcium and magnesium from the minerals and using these elements to make limestone. In the process, the insects may trap carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas, in the rock, the report said.

The transformation could take place when ants lick sand grains and stick them on the walls of their nests, but Dorn said the process is truly a scientific mystery. The study was published in the journal Geology. PTI

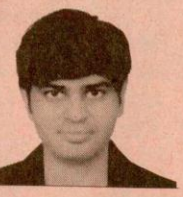
Financial Express ND 4/08/2014 P-12

MASSIVE OPEN ONLINE COURSES

The MOOC point

MOOCs have a long way to go for creating a "massive" impact

ARPIT MEHTA



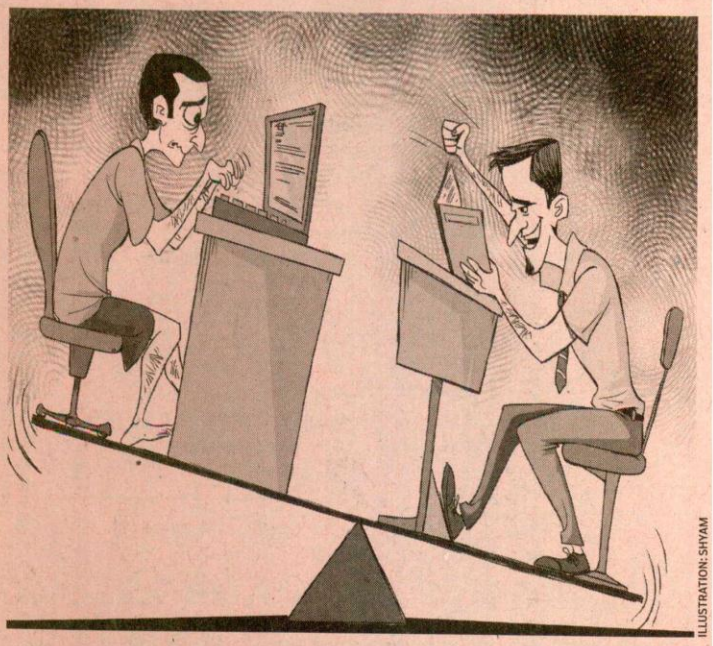


ILLUSTRATION: SHYAM

PROVIDING education to thousands of people across the world and that too mostly free of cost is a noble thought. However, implementing this thought successfully is not an easy task. The massive open online courses (MOOCs) are one of the most progressive steps in this direction.

A Canadian academician group coined the term 'MOOCs' back in 2008. It was used for teaching their course to a group of 25 paying students as well as around 2,200 students who got free enrolment. Over the next few years, three Stanford instructors started their two separate companies to provide MOOCs—Udacity and Coursera. Later, other players also emerged and MOOCs became a global phenomenon. In India, the closest approximation to MOOCs is the National Programme on Technology Enhanced Learning (NPTEL), an initiative by IITs and IISc Bangalore.

When you think of learning through MOOCs, the primary question that arises is: How do these companies "teach" thousands of students? I would say that, at this stage, they don't.

MOOCs are a big step towards the progress of our higher education system, but currently what these companies do is just deliver information over the internet, with occasional peer review and assessments. This, in my view, is not education. Education involves a much more comprehensive learning approach than just transmitting facts.

Technology is definitely an enabler in providing education access to more and more people globally. It would, however, be a big mistake if one believes that by providing instructor's recorded/live videos with few multiple choice questions or assessments/assignments reviewed by peers, we can provide a classroom experience to a student.

Data currently shows that less than 10% of the total enrolled students in MOOCs actually complete the courses. There are many reasons behind this. Before we get into the details, we need to understand how students are taught over the internet.

While these companies have a lot of renowned faculty and programmers who develop their learning platforms, hardly any of them hire instructional designers, curriculum designers or people who are trained in educational technology. Instructional design is the systematic process by which instructional materials are designed, developed and delivered. With technology available at disposal today, a particular concept can be taught through a recorded real-time video or an animation or as an interactive game, among other mediums. A true learning experience comes with an efficient blend of these mediums using the right instructional design.

While the MOOCs are a big step towards the progress of our higher education system, we must keep in mind that education involves a much more comprehensive learning approach than just transmitting facts, as is currently being done by the MOOCs

Developing effective instructional design is a hard skill and requires continuous practice over the years, even when most of the instructional designers generally have Masters or PhD degrees. Unfortunately, faculty who are not trained in instructional design currently design majority of the courses.

Another trouble that MOOCs face is handling diversity of various students. For a comprehensive learning, localisation becomes inevitable. Localisation is not just to do with translating the language, but more so with the context and the culture. Even in case of relatively more context- and culture-neutral courses like physics, learners tend to "localise" the same in form of references used and applications.

At the same time, MOOCs companies are trying to bring students of varied proficiency and academic background on the same platform to study. A lot of studies have already questioned the methodology for traditional offline classroom model, and scaling the same to thousands of students online is definitely less productive. Though a lot of advancement has taken place with respect to providing personalised and adaptive learning to learners, no MOOCs company has been able to successfully incorporate it in its model and scale till date.

In conclusion, there is a long way that MOOCs have to go for creating a "massive" impact. While in a traditional classroom model, faculty is the dominating factor to create an effective learning ecosystem, in a MOOC, instructional designer along with faculty will have to play a crucial role in the near future to ensure the promised value creation. As put by famous education researcher Yishay Mor, educators will have to shift their role from "providers of knowledge" to "designers of learning".

The author is co-founder, Sharp Edge Learning

Times of India ND 4/08/2014 (EDUCATION TIMES) P-2

DON'T PAPER OVER IT

Does the civil services preliminary test favour a certain kind of aspirants? *Education Times* finds out

I find this uproar about engineers supposedly having an edge over others in the civil services tests unreasonable. First of all, engineering is not the abode of the most intelligent as has been projected. Every discipline requires students to make efforts. To associate engineering with 'special knowledge and reasoning ability' means disrespecting other streams of study. The testing body, Union Public Service Commission (UPSC), makes a Bachelor's degree mandatory for applicants. Is it too much to ask graduate applicants to have basic numeracy, reasoning, decision-making and analytical skills when their job profile as civil servants would include industrial negotiations, interpreting reports, and creating and analysing strategic roadmaps? The UPSC has all the right to test people on the skills required for effective governance.

Those saying that humanities students have to work hard for the quantitative portion should realise that even engineering students need to put in extra efforts to study subjects like economics, public administration, polity and history. These subjects form the core of paper 1 – also called the civil services aptitude test (CSAT) – but are radically different from the engineering courses I took in college.

Further, it may be true that the comprehension section is relatively easier for English-speaking students but does a civil servant's work not require basic language ability? So, why should this not be checked before selection?

The reason CSAT was proposed both by the Alagh (2001) and Khanna committees (2010) was to provide a common and effective testing ground for aspirants. This test is not just about the skills we have but also about what we are capable of learning.

– **Pallav Kumar Singh**, engineering graduate and civil services aspirant

Paper 2 of the preliminary phase – also called the civil services aptitude test (CSAT) – has certain shortcomings. But the solution does not lie in throwing the baby out with the bathwater. What is needed is to structure the paper in a manner that ensures equity among civil services aspirants of all backgrounds, from engineering to the humanities.

The resentment against this paper is due to the ease with which engineers can ace certain sections in it. It is no big deal for engineering graduates to score 175 on 200 in a paper heavy on quantitative aptitude questions but the same is an uphill task for arts graduates. This disparity can be bridged by making paper 2 a qualifying paper the score in which does not count.

Also, paper 2 has little connection with the main test, unlike paper 1. The latter tests candidates' knowledge on polity, history and the economy, among other areas, which are assessed in greater detail in general studies in the main test. This gives test-takers a sense of how well-prepared they are for the main paper.

Moreover, the argument that coaching places certain students at an advantage over others is flawed. This overrates the idea of coaching while underrating one's abilities. What is it that one learns in a coaching class that one would not find in a newspaper article? Often, people with access to coaching do not qualify for the civil services, simply because there is no replacement for ability and hard work.

– **Sriram Srirangam**, owner of an IAS coaching academy in Delhi

The way our dissent is being presented makes it seem like a battle between English- and non-English speaking aspirants, which is not the case. The civil services (main) test requires all aspirants to clear a 300-mark English paper, which is meant to assess their language ability. When the purpose of the first (preliminary) stage of the civil services recruitment exercise is to sift non-serious candidates out and language abilities are evaluated later, then testing comprehension at this stage is pointless.

Further, in the main test, questions are in Hindi and English, which makes it difficult for non-Hindi speakers to attempt it, especially when they declare their regional language as the medium of examination in advance. This is further aggravated by the fact that when the examiner checks these answer sheets in regional languages, s/he has a model answer sheet in English. How unjust it is to check Tamil answers by comparing it with English answers? Further, paper 2 has nearly 30 questions each of maths and reasoning. It is not as if humanities students cannot attempt these questions but to pit us against those who have cleared tests like the JEE and CAT does not level the playing field. These sections are not just about correct answers but also about speed. IIT and IIM alumni tend to score high in paper 2 which makes them clear the total cut-off more easily compared to other students as currently, the qualifying marks for paper 1 are lower than those for paper 2.

We want only one paper at the preliminary stage, with an equal number of questions from all disciplines. Some aptitude questions may, however, be incorporated in this paper.

– **Laxman Yadav**, a civil services aspirant with a PhD in Hindi

THE PRELIMINARY TEST

Paper 1: 200 marks; 100 questions from history, polity, geography, science, economics and a wide range of topics

Paper 2: 200 marks; 80 questions on reasoning, quantitative aptitude and problem-solving

A total cut-off is declared based on the cumulative score of the two papers which varies from year to year but there are minimum pass marks for both sections. Generally, paper one's cut-off is lower than paper two's

THE MAIN TEST

English: 300 marks (qualifying paper)
Hindi/Indian language: 300 marks (qualifying paper)
Essay: 250 marks
Four papers of general studies: 250 marks each
Two papers in a chosen subject: 250 marks each

THE INTERVIEW

Marks: 275

Only the main test and interview scores are used to calculate the final rank

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New CAT pattern

Sarah.Zia
@timesgroup.com

TEST DRIVE

The common admission test (CAT), a prerequisite for entrance to Indian Institutes of Management (IIM), will be conducted by IIM Indore in a two-day testing window on November 16 and 22. The test pattern has a few changes this year but the syllabus and sections remain the same.

"I wouldn't recommend a major change in preparation since the same topics continue to be important. However, a slight change in strategy will prepare aspirants for the new pattern," says Rajesh Balasubramanian, a CAT expert and an author.

Unlike previous years, students can move between the two sections with greater flexibility. They do not have to complete the quantitative aptitude section to move to the logical reasoning section, as was the case earlier. "Students will benefit from this as they can move to the next section if they have finished one section before time or if they are feeling more confident. However, moving back and forth between questions frequently can affect their scores," explains Balasubramanian.

It is important to use the mock tests to determine one's strengths and use this knowledge to one's benefit. "If one has 170 minutes, then I would suggest spending an equal period of 60 minutes each on the two sections. The last 50 minutes should be a buffer period that can be divided unequally between the two sections depending on how well one has performed in the respective section," says Balasubramanian.

Since the number of questions has gone up to 100 – 50 in each section – the likelihood of being tested on diverse topics has increased.

> SALIENT FEATURES OF THE 2014 PAPER

- Exam duration raised from 140 to 170 minutes
- No. of questions increased to 50 in each section
- Tutorial not to be available at the start of the exam
- Payment through online mode only
- Candidates can switch from one section to another
- Number of cities go up to 99
- Candidates can give preference for cities but not dates, which will be allotted by IIM randomly

For the complete story, click on 'Test Drive' under 'Tests' on www.educationtimes.com

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Indo-Japan effort

Mausumi.Sucharita@timesgroup.com

Over 50 Indian and Japanese researchers are building an information network for natural disaster mitigation and recovery in India.

Started in 2010, the five-year DISANET project is in its final stages. Pilot testing is scheduled to begin in two months on Chennai's Marina Beach. Due to end in March 2015, the Rs 35 crore project is co-funded by the Japan International Cooperation Agency and Japan Science and Technology Agency.

The researchers from the Indian Institute of Technology, Hyderabad (IITH); National Geophysical Research Institute; IIT Kanpur; IIT Madras; International Institute of Information Technology, Hyderabad; Indian Meteorological Department (IMD), Hyderabad, IMD, Pune, the University of Tokyo and Keio University have developed technical bases for communication to be used in immediate rescue and post-disaster restoration efforts. Strong motion sensors have been deployed in the Indo-Gangetic plains in the foothills of the seismically-active Himalayas, while building sensors have been installed in Chandigarh.

> 6 Researchers from the two countries are building an information network for natural disaster management

Both countries have been struck with natural disasters in the recent past.

> For the complete story, click on '**College Life**' under '**Campus Life**' on *www.educationtimes.com*