Newspaper Clips

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Title : IIT course in offing to train engg faculty
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IIT course in offing to train engg faculty

ONLINE TRAINING Course to focus more on research aspects; govt plans to train 30,000 in 12th five-year plan

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NEW DELHI: Thousands of untrained faculty members of engineering colleges in India will soon get a chance to obtain a degree in engineering and training from Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) without joining the premier technical education institute or leaving their jobs.

Shortage of faculty had forced a large number of engineering colleges across the country to hire engineering graduates as teachers. But these graduates are not trained to be teachers and lack skills in orienting students towards research.

To tackle this enduring problem, the government has found a solution—an online part-time Masters' degree in Engineering Education conducted by IITs. The course is aimed at focusing more on research aspects of engineering than just equipping students to clear the examination.

"The course, designed for faculty members in engineering colleges will be conducted online, through live video lectures, ensuring that the 'students' do not need to stop normal teaching duties," said a member of the plannig committee headed by higher education secretary Vibha Puri Das.

The ministry plans to train 6,000-7,000 young faculty members each year. Training such numbers will require the participation of 1,500 faculty members of IITs and other institutions. The classes will be conducted in the evening and during weekends.

In addition, the Union government believes that the IIT faculty will be able to identify and motivate many of these candidates to pursue a part-time PhD programme.

On its own, the IITs are also expected to produce at least one PhD scholar in every department in the next five years.

In all, the government hopes to train around 30,000 faculty members in the 12th five-year plan period starting April 2012.

The government also plans to start a new three-year programme to help post graduate students in IITs take up teaching.

The demand for faculty in engineering colleges is expected to rise by 70% by 2020.

The number of students acquiring technical education in India has increased to over two million from less than a million in 2007-08.

To make the students employable, the government wants the industry to run a pilot project to train faculty.

ALSO ON AGENDA

- The government also plans to start a new three-year programme to help the post graduate students in IITs to take up teaching as their profession in engineering colleges
- To make the students employable, the government also wants the industry to run a pilot project to train engineering faculty

HindustanTimes
Title : EDUCATION BILLS TOO HIT RAJYA SABHA WALL
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EDUCATION BILLS TOO HIT RAJYA SABHA WALL

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NEW DELHI: Not just the lokpal bill, many other important government legislations, including the education bills piloted by minister for human resource development (HRD) Kapil Sibal, have also failed to get cleared by Parliament. The education bills have been pending before Parliament for over six months now.

The three bills—National Institute of Technology, Indian Institute of Technology and Education Tribunal bills—were approved by the Lok Sabha in previous sessions. However, they were not taken up for consideration in the Rajya Sabha because of paucity of time.

The same reason, however, did not apply for some other bills such as Factoring Regulation and National Capital Territory of Delhi Laws (Special Provisions), which has got the approval of the Upper House within a week of getting the assent of the Lok Sabha.

The UPA government's minority position in the Rajya Sabha has proven a bane for Sibal, who has four bills pending for approval in the upper house. Sibal had tried to reach out to members of Parliament to get the bills approved in the last two months but the Opposition was not convinced.

Sibal had introduced two new bills in the Rajya Sabha—the Copyright (Amendment) Bill and National Education and Research Bill, 2011—not without much drama.

Couple of members had prevented Sibal from introducing the copyright bill in the first go, citing conflict of interest as his son was a lawyer of a music company. However, he managed to introduce the bill another day amid the din. But he faced problems while introducing the

Architects (Amendment) Bill that was vehemently opposed by the BJP. Among the 17 bills approved by Parliament in the winter session, not even a single bill proposed by the HRD ministry was taken up.

HindustanTimes
Title : New norms for release of funds to universities
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New norms for release of funds to universities

UGC'S FRESH GUIDELINES Varsities' executive councils to now approve release of funds, instead of a UGC inspection team

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NEW DELHI: Getting funds for Indian universities without getting clearance from the institution's executive council and mandatory accreditation would become difficult from the next financial year.

India's higher education regulator, the University Grants Commission, has altered the funding scheme for universities from April 2012, which is also the mean commencement of the 12th five-year plan.

Instead of mandatory inspections, which often lead to delay in release of funds, the UGC will decide allocations for the entire plan period as soon as it receives the proposal cleared by the university's highest decision-making body, the executive council.

For instance, if the Physics department of the Delhi University wants money to upgrade its laboratory in the 12th plan, it will submit a proposal to the university. The university will then get it cleared first from the board of studies, then academic council, followed by finance committee and finally, the executive council. Once that is done, the UGC will allocate funds to the Physics department as per its total money allocation for the 12th plan. No one from the UGC will visit the department to evaluate the proposal.

EARLIER, A UNIVERSITY USED TO SUBMIT A FINANCE PROPOSAL TO UGC, WHICH THEN DEPUTED A TEAM OF EXPERTS TO CONDUCT AN INSPECTION

"Discontinuation of sending expert committee to assess financial requirements will help the universities prepare perspective plans in a more democratic manner," UGC chairperson Ved Prakash said.

As per the existing practice of more than four decades, the university used to submit a finance proposal to the UGC, which then deputed a team of experts to conduct an inspection. Depending on the remarks of the inspection report, the decision on the release of money was taken.

In cases of adverse reports the UGC used to get the inspection conducted again, resulting in delay in release of funds. There were also allegations of corruption in the entire system.

The UGC, as per the decision last week, stipulated new norms to monitor of utilisation of the money given through self disclosures and participation of students and faculty.

Another related decision with disbursement of funds was mandatory accreditation. No funds will be released without accreditation from a recognised agency such as National Assessment and Accreditation Council. "Accreditation has been made must," Prakash said.

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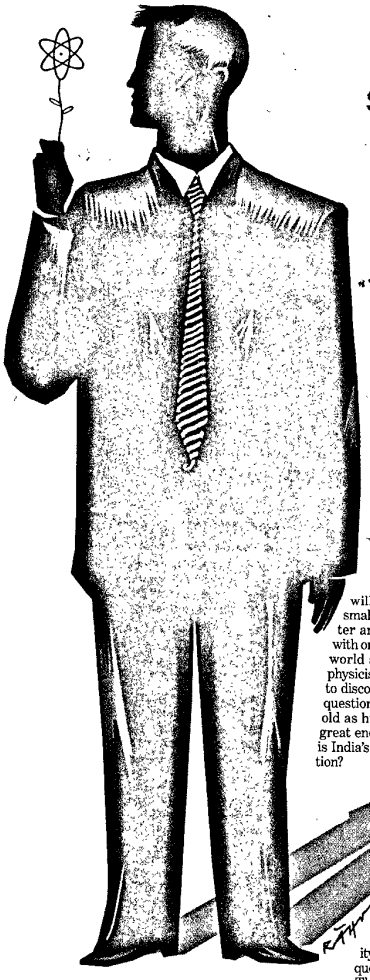
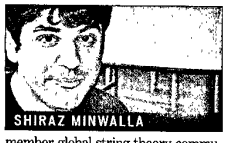


SCIENCE

World-class in pockets

BASIC PRINCIPLES *India can achieve its potential in science research only if schools, colleges become uniformly excellent*



SHIRAZ MINWALLA

What is the universe made up of? How did it begin and how will it end? What are the smallest constituents of matter and how do they interact with one another to produce the world around us? Theoretical physicists are engaged in a quest to discover the answers to these questions, many of which are as old as humanity itself. In this great endeavour, what is India's contribution?

It is substantial. My own area of research is string theory, a theoretical framework for quantum theories of gravity that hopes to address the questions formulated above. The hundred or so Indian string theorists — professors, PhD students and post-doctoral fellows — belong to a two- to three- thousand-member global string theory community.

Some of the string theory research carried out at institutes such as Mumbai's Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR) and Allahabad's Harish-Chandra Research Institute (HRI) is outstanding, and has shaped the development of the field in certain areas. Although Indian research output in string theory is not comparable with the contributions of the US or the European Union, in my opinion, India has contributed more to the field's development over the past five years than Japan or any single European country, and is certainly in a different league from any other developing country, including China.

India hosts research groups working in most other important areas of theoretical physics and other sciences, and Indian scientists continuously make important contributions in several of these areas. So from one point of view, the theoretical sciences are doing rather well in India; we outperform other developing countries in many areas and contribute at a higher level than some developed countries. However, there is another way of viewing our track record. India has more than four times as many people as the US and so should be producing that much more output. We are certainly not there yet.

What can we do to achieve our full potential? Historically, Indian scientific research has been inhibited by low funding, but in the past decade, at least at the top institutes, funding has improved dramatically. It is substantial, hassle-free and remarkably steady. As funding and work conditions improve, India is increasingly attracting talent from abroad.

The main bottleneck for the growth of scientific research lies in the availability of exceptional young people. In interviews for prospective PhD students at TIFR, the admissions committee usually finds that almost all students with the ability and training needed to embark on a career in research come from the IITs or a handful of exceptional institutes. The vast majority does not receive an education good enough for research.

The problem starts with the abysmal level of our primary and secondary education. Let us suppose that one-fifth of all six-year-olds who join school emerge with a good education. Let us assume that one-fifth of these students emerge from college with a good education. In this scenario, only one Indian child out of 25 emerges from the education system with a chance of contributing to research in the basic sciences. In other words, Indian research has to choose from just 50 million rather than 1.2 billion people, perhaps explaining why it compares poorly with that of the US.

But there is good news. The department of science and technology's INSPIRE programme aims to identify lakhs of highly talented secondary school students and give them Rs 5,000 to encourage them to study the basic sciences. The department also awards 10,000 INSPIRE scholarships, worth Rs 80,000 a year, to exceptional college students who choose to study the basic sciences. In tandem, six new Indian Institutes for Science Education and Research in Pune, Kolkata, Bhopal, Mohali, Trivandrum and Bhubaneshwar are being set up along the lines of the IITs, with the aim of giving students a top-notch education in the basic sciences; their students automatically qualify for the INSPIRE scholarship. The Indian Institute of Science in Bangalore, one of India's premier research universities, has recently started an excellent undergraduate programme. The government has also embarked on an ambitious programme to identify a few universities as institutes of excellence and upgrade their infrastructure and funding. Finally, the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research is setting up a major campus in Hyderabad, at which it hopes to train hundreds of PhD students every year. These initiatives could substantially increase the pool of bright young people available to Indian science and qualitatively enhance research output over the coming decades. For the long term, however, none of this is enough. Scientific research in India — like so much else in our country — can reach its full potential only once every school and college becomes an institution of excellence. This sounds like a goal worth moving towards in 2012.

Shiraz Minwalla is a professor of theoretical physics at the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Mumbai.

WHAT WE HAVE

1. **WORLD-CLASS** science is being done in some fields, in which we outperform even some developed countries.
2. **FUNDING FOR** research in top institutes has improved dramatically in the past decade. It is hassle-free, steady.
3. **SOME NEW** top-notch undergraduate programmes are coming up to prepare students for science research.

WHAT WE NEED

1. **A RAPID** and dramatic improvement in primary and secondary education, which is overall of low quality.
2. **MANY MORE** undergraduate institutions of excellence, which can prepare students for doing research.
3. **INCREASE WORLD-CLASS** research output, where we lag significantly behind global leaders, such as the US.

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India needs 2 lakh more schools, 1500 varsities

How is the education sector in the country as a business proposition?

India is fast becoming a knowledge economy superpower. A whopping 220 million children are enrolled in schools in the country. But still, 140 million students are left out. The gross enrollment in India at 12% is lower than the Asean countries. According to one estimate, India needs at least 200,000 schools. In higher education segment, the country needs around additional 1,500 universities and colleges.

At present, the quality of education in the country is not of a high standard. Therefore, there are huge opportunities for private players, not only in creating volume but also in improving the quality of education.

What do you expect from the government?

We hope that the government will get the long standing bills on education passed in Parliament to liberalize the sector so that the role of the private sector in higher education increases. We expect that 2012 will also witness the entry of foreign universities in the country. Opening up of the sector will increase the competition, which will not only lead to improvement in the standard of education but also will bring down the cost.

*Educomp's **Shantanu Prakash** says education in our country is largely recession free, and the middle class won't ever compromise on learning*

Will the Eurozone crisis affect the education sector?

The education sector is considered to be recession-free. Macro economic environment factors like dollar-rupee exchange rate, crisis in the Eurozone countries, inflation or rise in petrol prices do not impact the sector very much. Children still go to school. In fact, education is the last item on which the middle class will compromise.

What kind of growth do you hope for in the near future?

We expect that Educomp Solutions will continue to grow between 30% to 35%. I don't think the economic slowdown will have any visible impact on the company.

What is your growth strategy?

Educomp Solutions focuses on providing digital content. We own the largest school-level content library with over 16,000 modules of rich 3-D multimedia content to reach out to 4.8 million students across 8,100 private schools and 6 million students across 10,900 government schools. Educomp sets up computer labs in government schools and provides multimedia content in regional languages, testing and certification in computer education, full-time assistants as well as teacher training and monitoring and supervision.

Educomp at present serves 27,800 schools and 17.9 million students and educators in India as well as the US, Canada, Singapore and Sri Lanka. We are also setting up pre-schools, high schools and professional and vocational education institutions. At present, it is running 1000 pre-schools, 65 high schools, 310 vocational training centers and eight colleges in the country. In 2012, the number of high schools will increase to 101.

— **Prabhakar Sinha**