

Newspaper Clips

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STIRRING A HORNET'S NEST

The ministry of human resource development proposed a single, national-level entrance examination for admission to engineering and technological colleges across the country — the IITs, centrally-funded institutes, and several private, aided and unaided engineering institutes

The proposal was not received well by any of the IITs and other stakeholders, such as the faculty and students. It took several debates, a number of protests, severe online petitions, and IIT-Delhi and IIT-Kanpur's refusal to accept the changes and to continue with their own entrance tests to make the joint admission board of the IITs draw up a compromise formula, which was ratified by the IIT council and the central government

BREAKING IT DOWN

According to the new pattern, the IIT-joint entrance examination will be split into two parts — a main test and an advanced test

The main test will be on a par with the All India engineering entrance examination

A total of 1.5 lakh candidates will be shortlisted. These will then be eligible to appear for the advanced test

A candidate who makes it through will also be required to have been placed among the top 20% scorers of his/her respective board to be eligible for a seat in the IITs

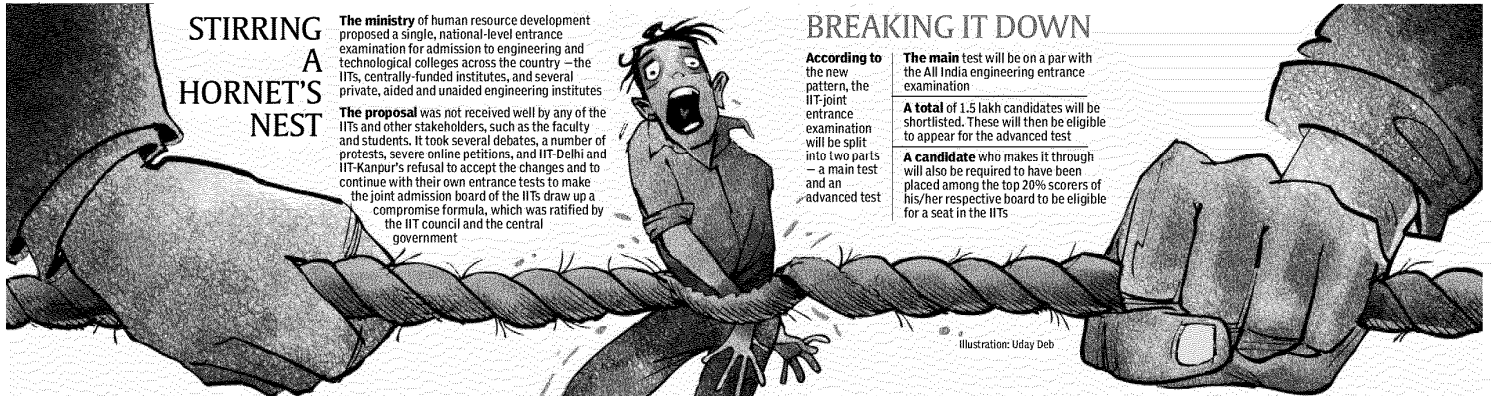


Illustration: Uday Deb

IIT aspirants still in a bind

When the IITs and the central government reached a compromise last week on the proposal for a single national-level test, most stakeholders thought that was the last they would hear of the row. But key concerns have still not been addressed. Is this just the calm before the storm?

Pallavi Smart finds out

Naveeta Singh (name changed) is not buying into claims that the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) and the ministry of human resource development's (MHRD) 'compromise formula' will help cut through the clutter.

"Sure, the compromise formula has brought in a sense of justice. But the government's push to have it implemented soon hardly gives candidates any time to understand the new pattern and to prepare accordingly. There is no clarity on the process of examinations as well," argues the resident of Mahim.

The compromise formula was drawn up following a huge uproar over the MHRD's proposal for a single, national-level entrance examination for admissions to IITs, centrally-funded institutes as well as private, aided and unaided engineering institutes. The IITs took umbrage at the plan 'to interfere with its autonomy'. Students worked up a sweat over the clause that board examination results will be given equal weightage. Quick on the heels came several debates, a number of protests by all stakeholders — the faculty and students — and several online petitions against the proposal. The last straw was IIT-Delhi and IIT-Kanpur's act of defiance — they both refused to kowtow to the government "unfair" plan. The joint admission board of the IITs then drew up a compromise formula, which was approved by the IIT council and the Centre.

As per the new pattern, which is expected to be effective from next year, there will be entrance examinations on two levels — main and advanced. The main tests will be on a par with the All India engineering entrance examinations. A total of 1.5 lakh shortlisted candidates can then appear for the advanced

test. But, there has been no relenting on the bone of contention — giving equal importance to board examination results. Aspirants who make it through the advanced test level have to be among the top 20% scorers of their board to stake a claim on a seat in the IIT.

OLD WINE IN NEW BOTTLE?

Many parents allege that the new formula skirts key concerns. When the compromise formula was given the green light, many stakeholders thought that it was the last time they would hear of the row. But those who were planning to initiate a public interest litigation (PIL) in court, with the help of an NGO, before the formula was drawn up and approved are refusing to lower their guard. "We are mainly opposed to the haste in implementing the 'reforms'. Candidates will not get sufficient time to brace themselves for the changes and prepare accordingly," says a parent whose son has been preparing for the IIT-joint entrance examination (JEE) for the last years.

Another parent is just as worried. "Reports claim that the IIT joint admission board will finalise details in August. That will leave just seven months to prepare for the examinations. How do they expect students to get ready for the new pattern in such span of time? Even changes made at the school-level are brought into effect at the start

of an academic year," Jayant Jain, president of the Forum for Fairness in Education, the NGO that was helping parents approach the court, says. "The PIL was decided to be filed mainly to oppose the government's rush in implementing the JEE reforms. Students start preparing for it as soon as they pass out of Class IX. They will obviously get confused if a new formula for selection is put up before them at the end of their preparations."

What many parents can't get over is the IIT faculty's sudden change of heart. It had put up a strong front against the government's rush in bringing about 'reforms'. But after the IITs and the Centre reached a compromise, all and sundry claim that students will not be made to suffer.

A member of the IIT-Bombay faculty says, "There is not much of a change in the pattern. The basic curriculum is still the same."

FLAWED OBJECTIVES

IIT aspirants, however, clarify that's not what's got their goat. To date, candidates have had to focus only on the JEE to break into the top ranks. But when the new system becomes effective, they will have to score equally well in their board examinations. "Earlier, I knew I just had to score above 60% in the board examinations. But now, I will have to focus just as much to be among the top 20% scorers in my board of examination," says a student.

Candidates even claim that the government's objective to scrap multiple entrance tests to ease the pressure on them falls through. Earlier, although there were several entrance tests, each varying in the level of difficulty, students made up their minds about which to focus more on. Now, they will have to worry about three examinations — the board, the main and the advanced. And, as a student puts it, "not one can be taken casually".

An IIT-Bombay professor says board examinations should not cause much worry as going by the precedent, students cracking the JEE have been top performers in board examinations. But, good just isn't enough, the clincher here is to be among the top 20% of scorers in their respective board, the strength of which will differ each year depending on factors such as size of the board, difficulty levels and evaluation pattern.

Praveen Tyagi, managing director of IITian's PACE, a coaching class for the JEE, wonders why

students are being forced to concentrate on Class XII examinations when the quality of board-level education is questionable.

Another floundering argument of the government in pushing for a single, national-level entrance test is that it will reduce the dependency on coaching classes, which have been flourishing given the umpteen number of entrance examinations that candidates sit. But, Tyagi explains, "Students will still seek specialised coaching even if it's just for a single entrance test."

A parent from Andheri says the new format will, in fact, make coaching classes thrive. "When my son was preparing for engineering entrance examinations four years ago, he joined coaching classes. He managed studying for board examinations on his own. But this time, my daughter, who is also preparing for admission to an engineering institution, may have to go for coaching even for board examinations."

MUCH IS STILL LEFT

The IIT council is still looking at the nitty-gritty of the new JEE, like whether to design the advanced test in the subjective format. While most of the teaching faculty prefers posing subjective questions to candidates to assess their 'true merit', it might be difficult to do so given the large number of candidates (1.5 lakh) who'll make it to that stage. "Yes, it's a difficult task, but not an impossible one. The merits and demerits of a subjective format will have to be evaluated," says Dr RA Mashelkar, chairperson of IIT-Gandhinagar who is also a member of the IIT council.

Mashelkar refuses to call the new format a compromise. He, instead, claims that it is a win-win situation for all stakeholders. "This system achieves five principals — reducing the pressure of multiple entrance tests, giving school studies their due importance, ensuring that only the best of the lot make it through, allowing equal opportunity to all meritorious students and retaining the autonomy of the IITs."

The senate of IIT-Bombay will hold a meeting on Thursday, which was originally called to discuss the institute's stand on the old reforms proposed by the MHRD. Now that much water has flowed under the bridge since the decision to call such a meeting was taken, the discussions are likely to focus on the format of the advanced test and 20% eligibility criterion.



HT, Mumbai

TESTING TIMES

*IIT spot gets tougher for CBSE, ISCE students***Charu Sudan Kasturi**

■ charu.kasturi@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: Students from the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) and other select boards may face a tougher battle in seeking admission to the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) in 2013 than students from other boards.

A cap that will allow only the top 20% students from each board to be eligible for IIT admission tests would hurt aspirants from tougher boards, experts have argued. Students from the CBSE, Council for the Indian School Certificate Examination (CISCE), and

the state boards of West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh may be worst hit. Many of them — who don't make it to the top 20% — would be as qualified as some of the top 20% students from easier boards, but will not be eligible for admission to the IITs.

The IIT Council had decided on new admission criteria from 2013, including the eligibility cap, arguing that students across all states were equally meritorious.

Although there is no evidence suggesting any difference in innate merit between students based on their board or background, students from some boards perform better than others

UNEVEN STANDARDS**TOUGHEST BOARDS**

CBSE, CISCE, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh

EASIEST BOARDS

Bihar, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh

Source: Analysis of student performances by professors Anil Kumar and Dibakar Chatterjee, IISc Bangalore

in common tests, two independent studies have shown.

In 2009, Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bangalore, scientists PS Anil Kumar and Dibakar Chatterjee compared the performance of students from India's 29 boards over 10 years in a common examina-

tion. The selection test for the Kishore Vaigyanik Protsahan Yojana (KVPY) is conducted by the department of science and technology each year to select the brightest high school science students, who are awarded a fellowship to pursue studies in the sciences.

Their results showed that the average score of students from the CBSE, CISCE, West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh boards in the KVPY test, a common examination unlike the Class 12 boards, in physics, chemistry and maths, exceeded those of aspirants from other boards. The results were published in November 2009 in *Current Science*, India's top science journal.

Breaking The Glass Ceiling

Higher education in India should not perpetuate inequality of opportunity

Yogendra Yadav



It's admission time again. Charming images of 'freshers' entering the campus and glossy advertisements of the universities we had never heard before hide the harsh reality of educational mortality from school to higher education. Elaborate coverage of rising cutoffs and entrance tests draw our attention to individual merit and luck. We tend to forget the overwhelming role of 'social luck' defined by the accident of birth. As and when we pay attention to inequality of opportunity, the focus is on economic condition. Media's overwhelming coverage of admission season masks the harsh reality of inherited group inequalities.

Reservations get some attention. Recently, a news report about entrance to the IITs mention that 1,403 students got admission under the scheduled caste category, only two dalit students could secure admission under general category. The figures also showed that if there was no reservation for the OBCs, the IITs would have had only 17% students from this social group that comprises around 45% population of the country. Official statistics did not reveal how many upper caste Hindu students make it to the IITs, but a simple back-of-the-envelope calculation shows that despite reservations, their share is anywhere between two or three times their share in population.

Caste however is not the only axis of inequality. Gender,

religion, class, locality and region, not to speak of disability, are some of the principal dimensions of educational inequality in our country. A quick look at Gross Attendance Ratio (GAR) for age-group 18-22 years in the 66th round of National Sample Survey (2009-10) brings it out. GAR is measured as percentage of students who report attending a higher educational institution to the total population in age-group 18-22 years. The overall GAR of the country in 2009-10 was 27.7%. In other words, of the 1,000 youth in the age group of 18 to 22, only 277 reported attending any higher educational institution.

Access to higher education for

We tend to forget the overwhelming role of 'social luck' defined by the accident of birth. As and when we pay attention to inequality of opportunity, the focus is on economic condition

all the disadvantaged social groups is substantially below this national average: the participation of women (23.2%) and OBCs (26.2%) as a whole was marginally below the national average. The figure was substantially lower for SC (17.3%) and villagers (18.7%) and even lower for Muslims (16.1%) and the scheduled tribe (14.2%). The strongest single factor is of course the economic condition. Among the lowest two quintiles of income distribution,



Learning can't be monopolised only by the privileged

the GAR was as low as 14.1% and 9.3%. As for the disabled, we can only guess that their situation is perhaps worse than any other category, for there are no official statistics on the number of disabled who manage to enter higher education.

We do not have comparable data for subgroups such as the lower OBC, extremely deprived dalit communities such as those engaged in sanitation or particularly vulnerable tribal groups, or nomadic/DNT communities, but the non-official evidence suggests that their condition is much worse than that of the larger category to which they belong. Census figures show many communities like Musahars in Bihar, several nomadic communities and scavenging castes have barely one graduate in the adult population of 1,000. At 48.6% the GAR among Hindu 'general' category is thrice

as high as among SCs and STs. We can expect the 'caste census' to yield clearer information on this.

The situation is compounded when an individual lies at the intersection of more than one axis of inequality. While the overall GAR for women stands at 23.2%, it is much worse for rural women (13.4%) and shockingly low for rural women belonging to the poorest income decile (3.8%). For men the GAR was 31.8%, for urban men 48.7% and for urban males in the richest income decile it was well over 100%.

We cannot expect that expansion of higher education will automatically reduce inequalities. Over the years, the access to higher education has improved for all social groups, but their relative disparities have not reduced substantially. While rapid expansion of private educational institutions

has helped to meet the acute need for increasing the capacity, it has also accentuated inequalities by reducing the scope of state action in favour of the disadvantaged. The entry of disprivileged social groups has shifted the site of deepest imprint of social inequality from the lower end of higher education to its upper end.

How then does one address these stark inequalities in higher education? Experience of the past suggests three lessons. First, instead of just talking about inequalities, we need to pay careful attention to the various dimensions of inequalities and how they interact with one another. This would mean targeting subgroups such as scavenging and nomadic communities on the one hand and identifying groups that lie at the intersection of many inequalities, on the other.

Second, talk about equity must be backed by resources. In particular there is a need for a quantum jump in the volume, range and amount of student support measures like scholarship, stipend, assistantship and loans for disadvantaged students. Third, reservation needs to be supplemented by a range of smart equity designs such as a multi-dimensional index of disadvantage for students and a diversity index for institutions.

If these steps are not taken soon equity might quietly drop from our higher educational policy motto of "Expansion, Equity and Excellence".

The writer is a senior fellow at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies.

Dainik Bhaskar ND 07-Jul-12 P-5

छह सौ नई यूनिवर्सिटी इस साल जुड़ जाएंगी एक-दूसरे से

संतोष ठाकुर | नई दिल्ली

देश की सभी यूनिवर्सिटी-उच्च शिक्षण संस्थान को आपस में जोड़ने के लिए शुरू की गई नेशनल नॉलेज नेटवर्क ऑफ इंडिया (एनकेएन) से इस साल 600 नई यूनिवर्सिटी-उच्च शिक्षण संस्थान और जुड़ जाएंगे। इससे ये सभी यूनिवर्सिटी आपस में अपने बेहतर कार्य और अनुभव को एक दूसरे के साथ बांट सकेंगी। इस समय देश की 774 यूनिवर्सिटी-उच्च शिक्षण संस्थान इस नेटवर्क से जुड़ गए हैं। केंद्रीय सूचना-तकनीक मंत्रालय

आईआईटी के दक्ष शिक्षक पढ़ा पाएंगे। ये ऐसी वर्चुअल कक्षाएं होंगी जहां सवाल-जवाब भी किए जा सकेंगे और छात्र अगर कुछ गलत करता है तो दूर बैठा शिक्षक उसे ठीक भी कर पाएगा। उन्होंने बताया कि इस समय इस विधि से कुछ विषयों में बांबे आईआईटी के शिक्षक गुजरात में क्लास ले रहे हैं। जबकि मद्रास आईआईटी हैदराबाद को, गोवाहटी आईआईटी पटना को, दिल्ली आईआईटी रोपड़ में क्लास आयोजित कर रही है।

चौबीस घंटे की सुरक्षा

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Girls' strength reaches 100 at IIM-B

Vanita Srivastava

vanita.srivastava@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: IIM, Bangalore, has attained a record of a special kind. For the first time in the history of the institute, 100 women have managed to get admission in the 2012-2014 batch.

Although the fairer sex constitutes only 26% of the total class strength of 377, this is a commendable achievement because the institute had been striving to improve its

THOUGH WOMEN ARE ONLY 26% OF THE CLASS STRENGTH, THIS IS A COMMENDABLE ACHIEVEMENT

gender ratio for the last three years.

"Internationally, the percentage of women in good management schools is 40-50%. We are still way behind. But this is a small step and we will strive to improve it gradually," Prof M Jayadev, Admission Chairman, told Hindustan Times.

Maintaining that no compromise had been made on merit, Jaydev said: "Besides the CAT score, weightage was also given to academic consistency and experience. When we decided on a comprehensive score, we took into account the overall potential of a candidate.



Illustration: JAYANTO

Girls have always been academically consistent."

Observing that the application of each candidate was scrutinised

thoroughly, he said: "During interviews, we looked for positive personality characteristics and intelligence."

Describing this as a great step towards improving gender balance, an alumni of IIM Bangalore said: "When I was studying, there were around 10-15 girls on the campus. I am very sure the increase in the number of girls will bring more diversity on the campus."

While IIM Ahmedabad has this year admitted 64 students (16.8%) 51 girls (11%) have got admission in the two-year programme of IIM Calcutta.

छह सौ नई यूनिवर्सिटी इस साल जुड़ जाएंगी एक-दूसरे से। उन्हें वीडियो कॉन्फ्रेंसिंग के माध्यम से अन्य

एक महत्वपूर्ण बचक का जान वाला है। इसमें इस मसले पर चर्चा की जाएगी।

Twinning programmes get breather from UGC rules

Kirtika Suneja

New Delhi, July 6: Close to a hundred twinning programmes — run jointly by a foreign education provider and an Indian institute — have received a breather from the government with the ministry of human resource development (MHRD) exempting them from the University Grants Commission (UGC) regulations of taking mandatory approvals from it.

As per the revised guidelines, degrees granted as part of twinning or collaborative programmes between Indian and foreign universities on foreign soil, will be recognised by the government. This is a great respite to almost 100 such programmes in the country which were under threat from UGC guidelines which, in an attempt to rein in fly-by-night operators who have set up shops in India, had made its approval mandatory for all collaborations between foreign and Indian educational institutions. Besides, it gave existing institutions six months to get approval.

"Twinning programmes are offered in collaboration



AS PER THE REVISED NORMS, DEGREES GRANTED AS PART OF TWINNING OR COLLABORATIVE PROGRAMMES BETWEEN INDIAN AND FOREIGN UNIVERSITIES ON FOREIGN SOIL WILL BE RECOGNISED BY THE GOVT

wherein a part of the course is offered here and the rest in the respective country. They will continue to operate as it is if they conduct their final semester and offer degrees on foreign soil," said a senior ministry official, without sharing the number of students who got a breather from this amendment.

As per a study conducted by the Association of Indian Universities (AIU), 631 foreign education providers were operating in the country in 2010. Of these, 440 were functioning from their home campuses, 5 opened their own campuses in India, 60 had programmatic collaboration with local institutions, 49 were operating under twinning arrangements and 77 had arrangements other than twinning or programmatic

collaboration. The data compiled by AIU showed an upward trend in the Foreign Education Providers advertising in India from 144 in 2000 to 631 in 2010. In fact, all the twinning programmes are in MBA and hotel management courses only.

A twinning programme is one whereby students enrolled with a foreign education provider complete their study partly in India and partly in any other educational institution situated outside India. "Foreign degrees will not come under our jurisdiction and hence, they can operate," the official added.

Out of the 440 foreign universities reported to be operating from their home campuses, 158 were from the UK, followed by 80 from Canada, 44 from the US and 43 from

Australia, among others.

The UGC regulations came in the backdrop of the parliamentary standing committee's report on foreign education providers which noted that out of the 60 foreign education providers having programmatic collaboration with local institutions, only 25 local institutions were affiliated to Indian universities or approved by regulatory bodies. Similarly, only 32 out of 49 twinning arrangements had the required approvals.

"What is more disturbing is that AICTE Regulations for Entry and Operation of Foreign Universities imparting technical education in India have failed to regulate the activities of foreign education providers dealing with technical education," the report added.

HT, Mumbai

Two-day strike to protest against higher edu bill

HT Correspondent

■ htmetro@hindustantimes.com

MUMBAI: Protesting against the Centre's Higher Education and Research Bill, 2011, the Bar Council of Maharashtra and Goa will go on a two-day strike from July 11.

The bill, once passed, will allow foreign education institutions to set up their branches in India along with their independent syllabus, which would be completely different from the Indian standards. The institutions would also offer courses in law. At present, the bar council controls legal education in India. They believe that if the bill is passed in the monsoon session, the independence of legal professionals would be curbed and it will also affect the

THE BILL HAS BEEN PREPARED UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF HRD MINISTER KAPIL SIBAL

bar council. It would also affect the law colleges in the country.

According to the council, the bill would also alter the Advocates' Act, 1961.

The bar council, under the chairmanship of advocate VB Konde-Deshmukh, has informed that it has appealed to the prime minister's office, the law minister and other ministries of the central government seeking to withdraw the bill in its current form. The council also plans to hold a jail-bharo protest if the bill is not withdrawn.