

Newspaper Clips

June 1, 2011

Tribune, ND 01-Jun-11 P-13

Do IITs and IIMs, our premier institutions, promote a culture of excellence? Jairam Ramesh's controversial comments about the students being excellent and faculty being less than 'world class' created quite a ruckus. A cross-section of students and teachers from these institutions give their views on whether the research and teaching are of international standards. Do we as a society value excellence and have the wherewithal to actively pursue it?

STRIVING FOR EXCELLENCE OR JUST SURVIVING?

MOHIT SHARMA

I WISH Jairam Ramesh had not made that statement. It is excusable and ignorable when it comes from fashionably cynical kids on campus. But when a man of his standing and experience makes such an oversimplified and scathing assessment, there is the very real danger of people taking his word at face value, given how he has been a part of the system here at IIT. In one stroke he labels faculty members as incompetent and the students as world-beaters. If only the world was as black and white.

No one would disagree with him on the major premise of the IITs not being world-class research institutions. For an institute with such name and pull our research output in terms of research papers and patents is far too low. How do you decide whom to pin the blame on? Top institutes around the world have two common features: access to funding and autonomy. The world class institutions that the minister refers to, one among which is University of California at Berkeley (a state university), have budgets running into hundreds of millions of dollars. Stanford University, a private university, has a multi-billion dollar budget. In addition to a Goliath-sized corpus. In comparison, our research budgets rarely exceed a few million dollars, and we have, at best, a pittance for a corpus.

Research needs money. Research needs a lot of labs and facilities. And most of all, research needs a culture. We are better equipped on all three counts than most other Indian universities, but we need a lot more if we are to compete with the big boys and call ourselves world class.

On the question of autonomy, we need to ensure that our institutes have enough of it. Give the IITs and IIMs more control over the donations made to them. Let them choose how many students they want and how they wish to admit them. Stop controlling their merit lists with quotas. Free them from the clutches of the government. But the minister already knows all of this and does not need a college student to lecture him on it would assume.

Let us get to the elephant in the room then. Are our faculty members world class? Dicy question. I had asked a senior the same thing in my first year. His response, "Look, you are going to have good professors and bad professors in universities all over the world." In a way, that sums it up. I could reel off names of professors who have been masters of their respective specialisations and attending whose classes has been an absolute pleasure.

The other extreme then - do we

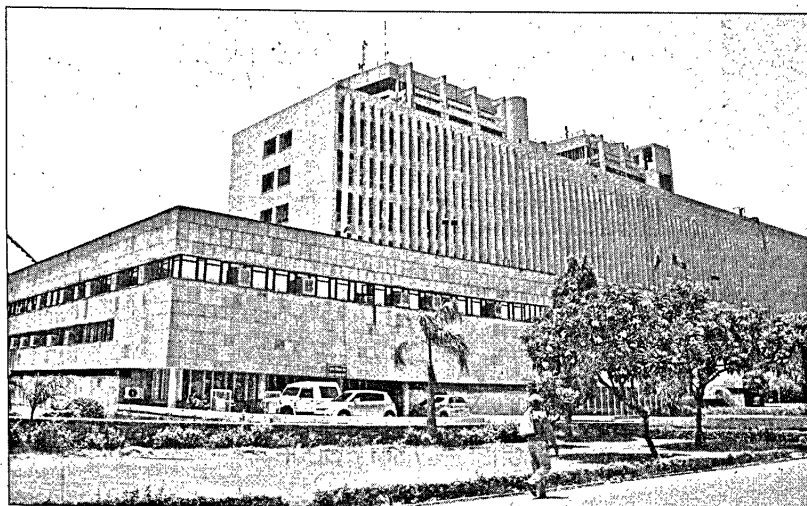


Photo: Manas Ranjan Bhui

have people in our institute doing Nobel Prize-winning work? I took this question to our mess tables and the consensus was a resounding 'no'. Nobel-winning research, one must understand, is a lot about the environment you work in and this is where the importance of a research culture kicks in. The world's top universities, apart from having generously funded and well-equipped laboratories, have highly competitive lab groups with a motley mix of undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral students.

~~They compete against each other~~ and against researchers from the rest of the world for rewards in the form of more funding, journal papers and patents. The environment is such that everyone around you aspires for those rewards and good ideas are in abundance. This is one area we can work on. But to pin all the blame for a less-than-average research culture on faculty members is unfair.

Which brings me to the other part of the Hon'ble Minister's assertion - are our students really world-class? Are we potential somethings waiting to explode, given the right encouragement and facilities, and inhibited only by less-than-world-class professors and the system? Most students here are brighter than average, true. Sadly though, there is a whole huge bunch of us who are just not enthused by engineering. Quite a few of us were driven to IIT and engineering only for the brand and because it was not fashionable in our cities and

towns for high scoring folk to get into liberal arts. The result? A lot many of us put in just about enough effort to scrape through our exams every semester and channelise our energy elsewhere - clearly not ideal raw material for a good culture. Which is not to say that there are not students in the institute who are not passionate about science and research. I know a few of them myself. But then, they are exceptions rather than the norm.

The IITs are not really thriving. We barely seem to be surviving, as the minister rightly points out, and it is more on reputation than anything else - a reputation built up by our more illustrious alumni from the last 50 years. In that sense, the students we had at the time (the Hon'ble Minister was a student here) were, in all probability, world class. The sense of this system's future that I get after being a part of it for five years, however, is not a very positive one.

I believe the minister would be serving the country better by directing his broadside towards his own government than his alma mater. He is smart enough to know what needs to be done without any one of us telling him. Simplistic, fatalistic demagoguery is okay when it spews forth from the mouths of his less illustrious peers. But you, Mr. Jairam Ramesh, we believe in you enough to hold you to a higher standard.

(The writer is a final-year student of civil engineering in IIT, Bombay)

WHAT THE STUDENTS THINK :



A gross generalisation only undermines the abilities and efforts of the few people who do make a difference to the institute's research output. A comment like this shouldn't come from a person of such high standing in Indian governance, an alumna, no less. He is in a position to influence the direction the IITs and the IIMs take.

Arundhati Anand Velamur,
an alumna of IIT Bombay, Class of 2010.



Jairam Ramesh himself said that his ministry is doing a PPP to come up with that centre in Jamnagar on marine biodiversity. He also said that it's a governmental set-up. It is not possible to do world class research. I guess he made a fool of himself by making contradictory statements; unless he really believes that the IITs are completely autonomous.

Vinay Sharma,
an alumnus of IIT Bombay, Class of 2008.



As far as the faculty goes, I feel that we could do much better with some newer and younger faculty members. This would not only help solve the problem of shortage of faculty but younger faculty generally seems to have enthusiasm towards research. Our faculty is involved with some world class research, still, that is more in spite of the system than because of it.

Pratik Goyal,
a final-year student at IIT Delhi.



IIMs definitely derive a lot of respect in industry and community due to the extremely competitive entrance process. There are a few world class faculty members in IIMs who have a sharp influence on the journey of a student at an IIM and thereafter. Any blanket labelling would be inappropriate.

Misha Pratap,
an alumna of IIM Lucknow



The first reaction is to be defensive and question the claim. We must take it as an opportunity to introspect. Jairam Ramesh is not completely wrong but criticism is different from critiquing, which we must do.

Ankit Sukhija,
an alumnus of IIM Calcutta, Class of 2011

FACULTYSPEAK

Two senior members of IIT, Bombay, on the condition that their names would be withheld had this to say:

Make it attractive for the best

The profession of teaching and research is not an attractive profession for most young students due to financial reasons. The top talent is not opting for a career in teaching and research. There are perhaps only 25 per cent of faculty members who do research that can be termed 'of international standards'. The IITs are far ahead of any university in India in terms of research quantity and quality. The socio-economic conditions must improve in order to create world class universities and institutes. World class institutes did not become world class in 50 years. The top universities in the world have a long tradition and attract talent from all over the world.

The Government must provide autonomy to institutions of higher learning. The UGC and AICTE have failed in managing higher education. There is a lot of corruption in these bodies. Every minister in charge of the Ministry of Human Resource Development tries to change something in IITs to get public attention. They will serve the country better by improving schools and colleges which are in a pathetic condition. Once these improve, there will be better people going in for higher education.

The Chinese invest heavily in higher education and elementary education. They offered 50 per cent of the American salary to the Chinese who were teaching in developed countries. As a result, hundreds of Chinese came back and enriched their universities. There are talented Indians abroad. The MHRD should devise a strategy to encourage good researchers to come back. In developed countries, teaching is a respected profession but in India it is not. One may ask any class in a school and verify this. Hardly any one wants to go in for teaching and research. Creation of world class institutions requires full autonomy, a good pay and a large proportion of people going in for higher education. Until this happens, we cannot have world class institutes.

No roadmap for higher education in the country In my opinion, the decision to open new IITs without having an adequate number of skilled scientific/technology manpower in the country was, by itself, a wrong decision. It was only motivated by considerations that were non-professional and had to do more with realpolitik in the then ruling class that took the decision. It is slightly irresponsible on the part of the minister to make such statements, instead of helping out the IITs that are already facing far too many difficulties due to the government's decision of opening IITs in a thoughtless manner.

The IITs have a better faculty than most state universities but that is hardly any consolation given that they have larger funding and better facilities. The entire thing boils down to one moot question: Is it not this government (to which Jairam Ramesh belongs) or that government, but no government in India has the desire to work out a well thought out roadmap for higher education in the country. The late Rajiv Gandhi made an attempt to start something in that direction but it was all lost later. (As told to Vipul Grover)

Why not find out the truth?

Whether IIM/IIT faculty are world class or to what extent can be verified by looking into their CVs and their contribution to research and publications in the journals of International repute. Therefore my personal suggestion to the Government is to set up a committee to find out the contributions in terms of research/publications and accordingly determine whether they are up to the level of world class standards or otherwise. Making opinions either in favour or against will not reveal the real truth about the quality of faculty members.

These are my personal views and are in no way connected with my association with IIM Lucknow.

—BK Mohanty
(The writer teaches Operations Research in IIM, Lucknow)

Times of India ND 01/06/2011 HT horizons P-7

IIT-D management dept launches course in sales and marketing

The Department of Management, IIT-Delhi, has started a certificate course in sales and marketing.

The department, which aims to create the necessary manpower for managerial positions, is offering a specialised module for professionals and students of sales and marketing. It aims at developing an understanding of management concepts and their application. It will start with the principals of management, marketing and finance. It will then cover in-depth,

the different aspects of sales management like role of communication, role of technology, distribution channels, forms of selling, advertising and promotion, international business and e-marketing etc. The participants will learn the process of developing sales and marketing approach, correctly position their company within its markets, and price the services accordingly – to ensure that their company gets more than its fair share of business. They will practice creating a marketing plan and strategy that they can refine, enhance, introduce and implement in the live projects which will be assigned to them. With solid sales and

marketing plan, and a cohesive sales strategy, the participants will be prepared to break away from the pack and put their company in lead position.

Those who can apply are graduates or equivalent in any discipline with minimum 50% marks. Students pursuing graduation may also apply. The fee for the programme payable through cheque/bank draft favouring "IIT Delhi" is ₹28,500 at the beginning of the course. The faculty is drawn from the Department of Management Studies, Indian Institute of Technology. For more information, contact Mohit Mridul, department of management studies, Indian Institute of Technology - Delhi Hauz Khas, New Delhi
Tele : 8860175462

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IIT Mandi signs MoU with German varsity

TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, MAY 31

India today discussed with Germany a possibility of collaboration between universities of the two countries where Indian and German institutions could partner to advance their academic interests.

Two MoUs were even signed today between IIT Mandi and the University of Stuttgart representing TU9 Germany and the University of Hyderabad and Westfalesehe Wilhelmns University of Germany to develop faculty with stress on doctoral and post-doctoral programmes; mutual recognition of qualifications, particularly vocational education and joint research programmes.

The pacts were signed in the presence of Human Resource Development Minister Kapil Sibal who

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held a meeting with German Federal Minister of Education and Research Annetee Schavan here.

Sibal said the setting up of such collaborative universities would be a welcome step to further higher education sector in the two countries. The minster also stressed that opportunities in the field of higher education and skill development in both the

countries were enormous and called for mutual recognition of degrees and diplomas awarded by the educational institutions of both the countries.

The HRD minister also emphasised increasing the avenues for vocational education and setting up joint ventures between the two countries under the public private partnership (PPP) model for skill enhancement. He noted that there was a need to publicise the fact that many courses at graduate and postgraduate level in Germany were conducted in English. This, he said, would help more Indian students to avail of the opportunity of studying in Germany.

India, meanwhile, offered to host an Indo-German Higher Education Summit later this year to be co-chaired by both the ministers with the participation of academics.

Hindu ND 1/06/2011 p-13

Our IITs, IISc. are not the best in the world, says C.N.R. Rao

Special Correspondent

BANGALORE: Even as a debate is raging on the quality of premier higher learning institutions in the country, noted scientist and chairman of the Scientific Advisory Council to the Prime Minister C.N.R. Rao on Tuesday observed that "IITs and the Indian Institute of Science [IISc.] are not the best in the world."

Union Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh had recently kicked up dust by saying that the quality of research and faculty of IITs and IIMs was not world-class. However, Professor Rao made it clear that his statement had nothing to do with Mr. Ramesh's remarks. He declined to comment on the Minister's remarks.

Addressing the inaugural session of a one-day seminar on "Frontiers of nanotechnology" organised here by the Karnataka State Higher Education Council, Professor Rao said: "The saddest thing is that not even a single research institute in India matches the best in the world,



C.N.R. Rao

or MIT and Cambridge."

He attributed it to the fact that other countries had a head start whereas India began late, and poverty came in the way of research in the earlier days.

Mediocre research

Referring to the demand for sophisticated equipment for research labs, Professor Rao said in a lighter vein:

"Shortage of equipment will make brains work better." Referring to the premier IISc., he said, "The IISc. is characterised by very mediocre research mainly because they have a lot of facilities."

He expressed concern that "we [Indians] do not work hard. Twelve hours of research a day is needed seven days a week if one wants to become a good scientist. There are hardly 10 scientists from India who are a household name in the world."

At the same time, Professor Rao pointed out that India had the potential to do well. "India is a great country and you have all the freedom here. But a little bit of nationalism is needed among us," he said, referring to how youth in China were proud of their country and dream of taking their country to the No.1 slot in science and technology.

"India has more brilliant people than any other country. Sixty per cent of India's population is from villages. It is these villages that have the best of brains. This is where our hope is. Those from big

cities like Bangalore are more interested in money and they will not make much contribution to the future of the country's research," he said.

Regretting that the country missed out on the semiconductor revolution earlier, Professor Rao stressed the need for not missing out on the nanotechnology revolution. "Semiconductor became a cottage industry in countries like Taiwan and Singapore. Similarly, India should make nanotechnology a cottage industry to get the full advantage from this technological revolution."

Referring to forecast by the Chinese, he said China was set to become No. 1 in all aspects, including science and technology, in the next 20 years whereas India was expected to be in the fifth position. He wanted India to be in the top position.

Pointing out that presently 18 per cent of the world's science research was from the U.S. while 13 per cent was from China, he said the trend was set to be reversed in the next three years.

No world-class institute in India: CNR Rao

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bangalore: C N R Rao, chairman of special advisory committee to the Prime Minister, has said there is not a single institute or university of global standard in the country.

While Rao was seemingly echoing Union minister Jairam Ramesh's argument that IITs were good only because of students and not faculty, he said he was not responding or reacting to Ramesh.

"He (Jairam Ramesh) is a bachcha. We understand how academic institutions are performing and what the levels of quality are. It is not as though somebody else needs to state how institutes are performing," Rao said.

Speaking at a programme on nanotechnology organized by the Karnataka State Higher Education Council on Tuesday, Rao said not a single science institution in the country was in the Top 100 and, maybe one or two figure in the Top 500.

"We are nowhere in the scheme of things when it comes to being a world-class science academic destination."

IS IIM/IIT FACULTY WORLD-CLASS?

Judged on parameters like research and thought leadership, they may not meet world standards, but discussions on whether the 'tag' is deserved are pointless because it ignores the real issues at hand

DEBATE

A question like this doesn't have a simple "yes" or "no" answer but, if one is forced, there is no doubt it has to be answered in the negative—even at the risk of alienating some of my close friends at the IIMs.

Perhaps the debate arises because we have been immunised to the tag "world-class" by copywriters who sprinkle the word as liberally as *ajinomoto* is in a Chinese take-away. If we accept the definition of world-class as "being of the highest calibre in the world", we should start with some global ratings of MBA institutes. I picked three well-respected surveys and found that, out of the 10 IIMs that now exist, only one (IIM-A) appears in *The Economist* ranking of 100 best MBA institutes and only two (IIM-A and IIM-B) appear in *Business Week's* list of non-US MBA schools—both in the "Not considered for ranking" class.

It might be argued that aggregate ratings like these don't only reflect on the faculty. But that argument can cut both ways. Perhaps even the institutes that make it to the lists owe their entry more to the super-intelligent students they attract, the opportunity these exceptionally smart individuals are provided to interact competitively with each other as well as with industry and a well-oiled system and syllabus designed by educationists and professors, who pioneered and built these institutes, rather than the existing faculty.

Can we try picking more direct tests for judging the faculty quality and, in particular, its contribution to research and management thought-leadership? We were all very thrilled when four Indians appeared in a much publicised list of the World's 10 Top Management Gurus a while ago. Two of them (C K Prahalad and Vijay Govindarajan) even taught at an IIM. Unfortunately, that was more than 30 years ago. Though statistics are not readily to hand, I suspect if we were to trace institute-of-author for seminal books on management, the share garnered by the current faculty at the IIMs may be equally meagre.

This was not always the case. When there were just three IIMs, professors of the stature of Vasant Mote, Pradip Khandwala and Uday Pareek (I limit myself to mentioning just three because there is a word-limit on this article) could hold their own in any global sweepstake. But that was then. For years the faculty at the IIMs has been bled of their best and most experienced members through retirement, attrition or dilution (for staffing newer IIMs). Given the war for talent in India, the IIMs haven't had the resources to recruit or the time to groom as sparking a con-



VISTAY BANAJI
CEO, Banner Global Consulting

For years the IIM faculty has been bled of their best and most experienced members through retirement, attrition or dilution (for staffing newer IIMs)

stellation as they have lost. This is not to say there is just no one of international stature available among the faculty today. The true question is: how many such stellar teachers and thinkers do we now have to spread over 10 IIMs? Consequently, how frequently does an average student benefit

from their presence?

The foregoing should not be automatically construed as a denigration of the effort or innate quality of the current faculty at the IIMs. There are many reasons the IIM faculty is in its present parlous state and most of them are not of the faculty's doing. In the past few days, I have heard several apologetics for the faculty at the IIMs on the television, who have put the blame on paucity of resources, lack of autonomy and the government's handling of the institutes. If these analyses direct us to seek solutions, I am all for them, but I find they are often self-contradictorily trotted out by speakers who first deny that any faculty problem exists for the IIMs and then go on to justify how such problems are inevitable under the current ruling dispensation.

Unless we accept the fact that we are not already world-class, we risk remaining complacent in our belief that our emperor institutes are attired in the best of faculty whereas we are actually down to our professional "inner wear" on a global standard. The bee's nest stirred by Jairam Ramesh has the potential to yield a store of honey if we shoo away the angry drones and focus on removing the impediments to making IIM faculty world-class.

The debate on remarks made by the Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh on the quality of IITs and IIMs and their research output is, to an extent, pointless.

The minister's comment is neither terribly original nor does it add insight to what has been voiced by his colleagues on either side of the political divide. Most insiders (read faculty) at IITs and IIMs are not insane enough to claim that these institutions are "world-class" in the sense that they are doing cutting-edge research or are unmatched by other institutions in the world.

This kind of comment has been often used to berate institutions and soften them up for whatever the political masters have in mind. Insiders dread these attempts to fix all kinds of problems, including the lack of "world-class" institutions in India. After all, they have already made India "world-class" in every other dimension!

The popular "world-class" perception of students is derived from the fact that global firms hire IIT and IIM students and that some of these students have become successful entrepreneurs or managers within and outside India. The fact that some of them later studied at "world-class" institutions



AJAY PANDEY
Faculty member, IIM-A

It would be more appropriate to ask whether the IITs and IIMs have enough people joining academia within India. If not, how can we have world-class faculty?

abroad corroborates this hypothesis. There are no such widely reported achievements of the faculty at IITs and IIMs.

The problem with the popular superlative-based classifications (world-class, excellent and so on) and judgments is that they ignore statistical odds, are based on what is re-

ported in the media and fail to raise meaningful questions.

There is a difference between becoming a world-class plumber, electrician or a manager and becoming a world-class physicist, biologist, historian, musician, actor and so on—professions that are much more competitive and in which the odds are low for anyone to be called world-class. In some cases, the term "world-class" has no meaning.

How do you define Jane Goodall, who spent almost her entire lifetime studying chimpanzees? Is she "world-class" and if so, in what? Or, do we expect only those who are interested in general and abstract issues to be world-class like Einstein, Ramanujan or Darwin?

The second problem with this type of classification is that it confuses "unit of analysis". What is "world-class"? The faculty or the institution? Is there any empirical (not logical) connection between the two? In reality, world-class academic institutions, or for that matter, football clubs, compete with each other to get the best academics and soccer players, respectively. If they succeed, they also end up attracting world-class academicians and players.

It would be possibly more appropriate to ask whether the IITs and IIMs have enough

people joining academia within India. If that is not happening, how can we have world-class faculty in India? Another relevant question would be whether Indian institutions can attract or retain such world-class academics and if not, then what needs to be done. The IITs and IIMs will not become better by competing with each other or by the entry of private institutions without competing for the key resources, that is, potential world-class faculty members. If the basic ingredients are missing, are we going to build large-scale systems or institutions by relying on individual brilliance or do we want a competitive space in which excellence is sought by a large number of aspirants?

One intervention in the direction of making these institutions "world-class" in the recent past has been to open more of them without bothering about infrastructure or faculty. Ramesh is right about IITs/IIMs, but he is even more correct about some of the new IITs/IIMs because they neither have faculty nor a track-record to speak of. Another interesting intervention to make them "world-class" has been to expect the established IIMs to be self-sufficient by generating enough revenue through programme fees, consulting and training income. These revenues should not only support institute expenses but also PhD programme students and their own research. Nonetheless, the faculty is expected to not only do more research but be accountable for the quantity and quality of research!

Hindustan Times ND 6/1/2011 p13

UGC scholarship direct to students

FAST TRACK End of red-tape, UGC to tie up with banks to create accounts where the money will be transferred

Charu Sudan Kasturi
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NEW DELHI: Soon, thousands of students who win University Grants Commission (UGC) scholarships each year may no longer need to suffer delays in actually getting the money.

The UGC plans to cut through the red tape institutionalised in the country's uni-

versity administrations to allow scholarship winners to access their financial aid directly from banks, under a landmark proposal it is working on.

The commission has already held meetings with Canara Bank and plans to meet other banks to tie up with them and open bank accounts for all scholarship winners who can then access their money directly, top

government sources have told Hindustan Times.

The UGC, in collaboration with central ministries, offers a slew of scholarships to students from scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and minority communities, and for single girl children.

At present, the UGC transfers the scholarship amounts of selected students to their uni-

AT PRESENT, MONEY IS TRANSFERRED TO THE STUDENTS VIA THEIR UNIVERSITIES

versities. The universities are then required to verify whether the student is meeting the requirements of the scholarship

before handing over the scholarship.

But most universities take several months over this review process, routinely leading to delays in the scholarships actually reaching the students they are intended for.

Several scholars have even quit their academics because of their inability to afford their education while waiting for

scholarships they have already earned, but not yet received.

Under the new proposal, the UGC will transfer the scholarship amount of a student to banks, who will then verify whether the student is meeting scholarship requirements before allowing him access to the money. Banks will be paid a fee by the UGC for the service.

Banks will have to complete their scrutiny and decide on allowing students access to their money within a fixed time period, in exchange for the service fee.

The proposal is also likely to benefit banks that tie up with the UGC, since the scholarship money will expand their deposit base for other investments or loans.

Two years on, Sibal's much-hyped higher edu-Bill still in limbo

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Even after two years, the much-hyped Bill on National Commission for Higher Education and Research (NCHER) that was said to revolutionise higher education in India continues to hang fire.

HRD Ministry officials have, however, kept their fingers crossed hoping that the Bill may see the light of the day in Parliament during the ensuing monsoon session.

However, others contended that with a long list of education bills already lined up, the fate of Kapil Sibal's dream Bill may further continue to hang in balance.

According to them, the Bill aimed at ensuring quality and accountability in higher education, is still stuck up in the stage of inter-ministerial discussions. Presentations of the draft Bill though had been made at the PMO, early this year. It is now waiting for Cabinet approval. However, sources added that this has been delayed owing to the cold war between the Health and HRD Ministries.

Sibal had wanted to bring medical education sector under the overarching sway of the NCHER. But, the Health Ministry, being not in favour, wriggled out with the intervention. His attempt to get into legal education system was also similarly thwarted.

The erstwhile Left-ruled West Bengal and Chhattisgarh among others had also put their foot down over the draft for the NCHER Bill saying it would lead to "over centralisation" of higher education thereby reducing the authority of State Governments..

While the sources displaying optimism pointed out that the much-awaited Bill may see the light of the day in the next session chances are remote. What about the

major education Bills that happen to be in a limbo," they questioned.

The four our key education reforms Bills that were introduced in Parliament on May 3, 2010 are all hanging fire, stuck in the Standing Committee ever since. These Bills are: the Foreign Educational

Institution (Regulation of Entry and Operation) Bill, 2010, Educational Tribunals Bill, National Accreditation Regulatory Authority for Higher Educational Institutional Bill and Prohibition of unfair practices in Technical Educational Institutions, Medical Educational Institutions, and University Bill.

"In a hurry to push through his reform agenda, Sibal failed to convince Parliament to give early approval of these Bills," felt the sources. One of them the Education Tribunal Bill may have got the Lok Sabha nod, but got stalled in the Rajya Sabha.



Coming soon: PPP model for higher studies in India

Kirtika Suneja
New Delhi, May 31

A NEW paradigm of public-private partnership (PPP) in the rapidly growing higher education sector is on the cards, with a role for corporates in developing the necessary infrastructure. In parallel, the norms for public funding of education as a whole — which is set to be increased

from roughly 1% of GDP at present to 1.5% — would be revamped with the inclusion of performance incentives.

Senior officials said that the ministry of human resource development (HRD) and the Central Advisory Board of Education would meet here on June 7 to discuss the PPP model for higher education that would likely comprise concession agreements dis-

tinct from those for other areas of physical infrastructure like ports, roads and power. Different models are being looked at: Basic infrastructure, outsourcing, equity or hybrid and reverse outsourcing.

The basic infrastructure model will involve the real estate player providing land and others offering education services.

■ Continued on Page 2

In the reverse outsourcing model, foreign educational institutions will set up campuses in India and deliver lectures to students in India remotely. Under the hybrid model, even Indian institutes can offer education services to other countries.

Sources said the HRD ministry, along with CABE which advises the central and state governments, will formulate the agenda for education for this year. Besides defining the funding parameters and devising suitable PPP models for the sector, the twosome will look at internationalisation in the higher education space, determine alternative modes of delivery and frame a new National Policy on Education, the sources added. The ministry has proposed that the public funding pattern should be norm-based under three broad categories — mandatory norms for mini-

Coming...

imum substantive grants to all universities; provision of maintenance grants to all universities based on transparent and objective criteria and performance-linked incentive grants based on assessable outcomes. "We are working on education guarantee finance schemes and the legislation is being framed," said a top ministry official. An HRD ministry paper had earlier said that inclusive policy must primarily focus on state-supported expansion of higher education. The idea is to upgrade facilities in the existing publicly funded institutions and make use of the opportunities of under-utilised spaces in these institutions. Also, facilities in non-aided institutions would be improved through an appropriate PPP

model. The ministry is also setting up 14 Innovation Universities in the PPP mode under innovative disciplines with the participation of private parties would be encouraged.

Financing of these ventures would be done jointly by the government and the private firms. The ministry has already identified five universities for this project and they will have the freedom to formulate their own policies on admission to programmes and offer scholarships to the top 20% of the student community at the undergraduate and post-graduate levels.

The forthcoming government-CABE meeting would also deliberate on innovation inculcators to create the necessary linkages between the university, industry, research labs, civil society. This would also be explored under the PPP mode.

India, Germany sign MoUs in fields of education, R&D

AJAY KUMAR SHUKLA

New Delhi

INDIA and Germany on Tuesday signed four memorandums of understanding (MoU) during German chancellor Angela Merkel's visit to promote skill development and to expand their cooperation in areas relating to education, research and high-tech areas like nuclear physics.

Another two MoUs were

signed by the ministry of labour headed by Mallikarjun Kharge with Germany's federal minister of education and research Annette Schavan.

First MoU was signed between National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) and iMOVE. Both have agreed to develop their cooperation in the field of skill development. The MoU would promote vocational education and training and

foster private sector initiatives in vocational education and training between German and Indian.

Second MoU was signed between ILF&S Cluster Development Initiative and Handwerkskammer Rhein-Main (Rhine-Main chamber of skilled craft). ILFS is likely to set up 100 multi-skilled schools across the country.

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Financial Chronicle ND 1/06/2011 P-10

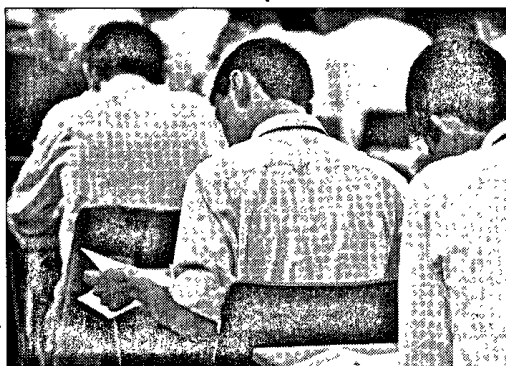
Devising a perfect admission criterion is not easy

PURNENDU GHOSH

WE CAN get vitally engaged to an activity if it is important and meaningful to us. For vital engagement we need to have knowledge of the activity as well as an aptitude for doing it. Experience says that trivial activities become meaningful over time if done with care and concentration. The concept of vital engagement is important in college admissions. Though we don't take admission to colleges to get vitally engaged, but wouldn't it be much better if that was possible?

College admission criteria are generally performance-based. Putting up a 'cut-off' list based on the marks/grades obtained in the school exam is perhaps the easiest option. For admission in some courses (mainly engineering and medical

marks/grades obtained in the school exam are not considered; instead the admissions are based on another test specifically conducted for this purpose. This test is also a measure of performance and merit. Can knowledge be de-linked from aptitude? In our present testing mechanism performance and aptitude are indistinguishable. For admission in general courses, perhaps, aptitude tests do not play a significant role. For engineering and medical courses, aptitude test should be an integral part of the screening and selection procedure, as it is an important index of compatibility and future success. Since in the present system no such tests are conducted, it will help students if they get professional counselling or at least self-assess their aptitude, and decide the



study course. It should be a matter of choice for the authorities, depending on the course, as to how much relative weight to put on performance and aptitude.

Some educationists believe that performance in the entrance test is a true measure of a student's merit, and since the basis of admission is to reward

excellence, such tests should only be performance-based. Besides, they believe achievement tests are less vulnerable to cultural and socio-economic bias. Many educationists also don't agree to the notion that aptitude tests are better than achievement tests in identifying high-potential students in low-performing schools.

It is not easy to devise a perfect test that can accurately assess a student. Entrance tests are conducted for the purpose of screening students. These are conducted to offset varying grading practices various schools/boards follow. It is believed to be a tool for correcting the effects of grade inflation and the widely variable quality of school teaching. Some say it offers a way to identify talented students who otherwise might not

meet traditional admissions criteria. While accepting the above logic, would not it be logical to expect that both kinds of tests have some kind of correspondence, and demonstrable relationship to specific subjects taught in the school. If it is so then why is it that even a very good student needs to take special coaching to qualify in the entrance exams? If the performance of the student in the school exam is not taken into consideration for admission, students will lose incentive to perform well in these exams. And that is exactly what is happening at present. Students don't hesitate to miss regular classes so that they can attend special preparatory classes.

(The writer is a biotechnologist and ED, Birla Institute of Scientific Research, Jaipur)

MAKE THE RIGHT CHOICE

There are many B-schools in the country that offer management courses with tall promises at the time of admission. Choosing the right school can be a daunting task. However, asking the right questions, doing a thorough background check of the institute and checking out the facilities will help you to pick the right one, says DR JK GOYAL

In the last 15 years, there has been a phenomenal increase in the number of B-school. For example, the numbers of AICTE approved management institutes have gone up from 1,888 in 2005-06 to 3,858 in 2010-11 and the number of seats offered has gone up from 1.2 lakh to 3.8 lakh during the same period. With the increase, there is variation in terms of the quality, fee structure, delivery mechanism.

Apart from AICTE approved institutions, there are many study centres offering management programmes, both private and public. Making the right choice is a daunting task. There are many questions that one needs to take into account. Which B-school to pick? How do you want to do MBA/PGDM? To choose a school in your home city or study away from home?

Why do MBA?

This is the most repeated question in an interview. Most of you must have been trained by coaching institutes to handle this question in different ways. Do not start giving these answers. One needs to make an introspection and address this question in relation to yourself.

Cost Effectiveness

There is difference among the private sector self-financing institutions in terms of the fee charged. The fee for a two-year full time course of most of these B-Schools varies from as low as ₹3 lakh to as high as ₹10 lakh. In India, in majority of cases, it is the parents who bear the burden of fee even at PG level. A small section of MBA aspirants avail bank loans as well. However, that too is guaranteed by the parents.

One needs to consult parents and make an objective assessment. Even if your parents have the capacity to pay, do not just go for a high-fee charging B-School if the benefit does not match the cost. Most of you do calculate your return on investment (ROI) these days. Sometime, it is better to settle for a marginally 'inferior' B-School if the fee difference between two B-schools is too large. One needs to check:

- What is the payment schedule—how many installments do you have to pay the total course fee. If the first installment is too heavy; it indicates that everything is not right. Some B-Schools offer alternative payment schedules, giving discounts for one-time full payment. Please check thoroughly
- Make sure that there are no 'hidden' and/or additional charges later on. Read the fine print of the brochure carefully. Do not hesitate to ask directly
- Some B-Schools offer free laptops and foreign trips. In fact, it is part of the fee component. Find out



whether these components are compulsory or optional. You may opt out of these add-ons if you do not find them worth while

- Some schools publicise the availability of a lot of scholarships and fee discounts for meritorious students in their admission advertisements. Most of these are marketing gimmicks. However, there is no harm in seeking these scholarships or finding out the details before taking admission.

Where to study?

This is another major issue which you must sort out. The benefits of being a day scholar are that you do not have to incur an extra hostel fee and other expenses which may be a little over ₹2 lakh or so during the entire study period. You are assured of the comforts of your home. However, there are some distinct benefits of pursuing a management course away from the comforts of the home.

Hostel or PG accommodation makes you more responsible. You remain focused on your studies. You spend much less time in travelling. In case you opt for hostel or PG accommodation, it is better to take admission in a B-School which is beyond a 200 km radius from home. A B-school which is within this radius would always prompt you to go to your home on every weekend and come late on

Mondays. You would be neither at home nor in hostel.

In case you have to make your own PG accommodation, do scan the nearby area thoroughly and act accordingly.

Which school is good?

This is perhaps the most difficult part. Every B-school flaunts the standard six parameters—state-of-the-art infrastructure, well-stocked library, excellent computer labs, experienced faculty, most updated course curriculum and 100 per cent placement.

A key point to keep in mind—an education provider knows much more than a student. How can a student judge the competence of the faculty? How to check the authenticity of the placement claims. It is your duty to take all possible precautions and checks:

- Check the approvals and affiliations of the B-School thoroughly. Management as a subject comes in the domain of technical education hence, the school must be AICTE approved. Make sure that the programme to which you have been offered admission is AICTE approved
- Some institutions run other non-AICTE approved courses as well in the same or nearby campus. One must be aware of this fact
- Many B-Schools are affiliated to universities. In case a B-School is affiliated to a deemed university, double check its status
- Some of these deemed universities are entangled in court cases. Similarly, you must exercise abundant caution in case of State level private-sector universities
- One must check the accreditation status of the B-School. There are two

national bodies which accredit universities and institutions. These are National Accreditation and Assessment Council and National Board of Accreditation. Both these agencies accredit the specific programmes of a university and not the institution as a whole. So while an institution may proclaim that it is NBA accredited, the programme in which you are being offered admission may not be so

- Many magazines, newspapers, news channels and websites are also ranking

There may be cases where in spite of all precautions, you realise later on that the B-School which you picked up is not worth it, that the second one is better but you have already paid fee in the first school. In such cases, do not panic. First of all make a cost-benefit analysis again. If the difference between two B-Schools is marginal, forget the latter offer. If it is substantial, act fast

institutions. Do not rely on any one of them. Cross check with others. Usually, B-Schools whose names appear in multiple rankings may be more reliable

- Visit the institution, particularly by public transport system. Some institutions ensure free transport facility, but in long run many a times you have to rely on public transport. Take a thorough round of the institution; talk to as many people as possible without offending the local staff and teachers but seek prior permission

- Check the website of the institution. It is mandatory for all AICTE approved institutions to provide exact information in a standard format in this section. Read this section carefully.

There may be

cases where in spite of all precautions, you realise later on that the B-School which you picked up is not worth it that the second one is better but you have already paid fee in the first school. In such cases, do not panic. First of all make a cost-benefit analysis again. If the difference between two B-Schools is marginal, forget the latter offer. If it is substantial, act fast. You must be mentally prepared to withstand some financial loss and physical torture. There are AICTE guidelines in such cases which all institutions must adhere to. However, there are a few grey areas as well.

As per AICTE guidelines, an institution is bound to refund the fee (after deducting ₹1,000) in case a student withdraws from the course before its commencement. In case, a student withdraws his admission after the commencement of the programme, the fee refund becomes tedious.

(The author is director of Jagan Institute of Management Studies, Rohini)



Open sesame!

India's open universities offer millions of students in the country and abroad a chance to realise their dreams of getting quality higher education

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The open and distance learning (ODL) system breaks barriers. No matter who you are, where you are based, what your previous credentials, and how you scored, a strong will and a bare minimum eligibility criterion can make you realise your dream of a higher education through this mode. You can be a dentist with a love for history, a software engineer enamoured by pottery, a housewife besotted with psychology, a media professional fascinated by heritage conservation, a young graduate craving for an MBA, a school drop-out or someone with no formal qualification. The open-learning system is indeed open - a short preparatory course can lift you onto the tertiary-level education universe.

Today, more than a third (30-40%) of the total 1.32 crore students pursuing higher education in India are studying through ODL -

under the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), 14 state open universities and more than 200 dual-mode (which have both regular and distance-mode streams) universities and institutions.

There is a "huge demand" for open and distance courses in India, says Swaraj Basu, ex-director, Distance Education Council (DEC), which gives recognition to ODL institutions. The favourites are conventional subjects such as history, political science, English, BA and BCom, followed by education, management and computer science.

"The numbers (in enrolment) are increasing like anything," says Basu. As programme coordinator for MA history at IGNOU, he saw the large number and diversity among the takers. "Even doctors and engineers can join and do MA in history. You should be a graduate in any discipline. We have about 7,000 students per year for MA history. It's the same in political science, sociology, public administration. There's

more demand in MA in English - about 10,000."

Most non-regular students in the country go in for printed, self-learning material (the "foundation" of ODL in India) instead of opting for online courses, which still have much limited reach despite the government's thrust on ICT. "Technology is helpful mainly in support services like getting assignments, information, online submission of forms, getting the admit card, and the result," says Basu.

Another yet unaddressed area is quality and support services. While there are noteworthy examples of open and distance education institutions, the physical distance is irksome for many aspirants and students.

Basu says, "I think most try to maintain quality. There might be some aberrations. Quality is a big concern. A mechanism for quality regulation is yet to be ready. The process of evaluation of programme and accreditation (to be executed by DEC) is at the planning stages."

Happy to be here:
Graduating students after their
convocation ceremony at IGNOU

