

Newspaper Clips

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IITs May Become Less Relevant

By Invite



TV MOHANDAS PAI

The IITs have completed 50 years and have helped build India. They were set up for producing high quality technical human capital for India and have met their objectives. But, as is the character with such institutions, they have not changed with the times and are not providing India with what she now needs. They have remained largely teaching institutions, as they were set up, not transforming into research based, innovation driven agents of change for the India that is now emerging. They seem unwilling and unable to change - overburdened by work, driven by a small vision, starved of adequate resources and owned by an apathetic master. They seem to be in a state of perpetual decline though there are some bright spots, but not large enough to meet the needs of time.

Very recently, a Union Minister made a statement that IITs are known for their world class students and their world class alumni, of which he presumed himself to be one but not world class faculty. Partly true, but forgetting that he and his ilk are largely responsible for this outcome. The IITs today enjoy substantial academic autonomy but lack adequate administrative and financial autonomy. The IIT boards and the directors are unable to take any financial decision which they deem fit without the approval of the government. Even for an overseas travel of the director or the faculty, permission is needed. They are subject to austerity measures of the government, a perfect situation to emasculate an educational institution.

The demand for an IIT seat is enormous and has spawned a tutorial industry that earns more revenues than the IITs themselves. This has resulted in large number of students spending up to two years of their youth going to cramming schools learning pattern recognition, forgetting the art of thinking and problem solving knowing that their lives are made once they get entry into the hallowed portals. Today about 60% or more of the intake is from the coaching mandis. This has also resulted in many bright young Indians deciding not to undergo the ordeal and go overseas for higher education. 250,000 of them study overseas, over 110,000 in the United States, about 45,000 in the UK spending about \$6bn on fees and costs annually, depriving this country of much needed resources for education and talent, adding to the wealth of those countries.

The IITs too have steadfastly refused to change. They remain small by global comparison. They are between 6,000-9,000 students in size, with an annual intake of about 500 PhDs, and about 1,000 undergraduates. Overall, the 15 IITs graduate 7000 undergraduates, 6000 post graduates and about 1700 PhDs annually. Sadly only about 2% of the undergraduates go on to their masters and PhD in the IIT system. The IITs hold fast to the idea that by squeezing input they can get a quality output, an idea that has been consigned to the dustbin of history. Increasing the scale and size can give them the diversity of talent, the resources, the ability to have more quality faculty and the depth and width needed for an elite educational institution. Even the current increase in size was forced on them because of social initiatives.

Contrast this with China. China today has about 1,000 universities, each between 25,000 to 40,000 students, running fully residential courses, turning out over 50,000 PhDs annually. China may, in the next 20 years, it will overtake the United States as the world centre of higher education.

The Top Five Chinese universities, in the global top 50 now, have between 25,000-35,000 students and about 7000 PhD students each. China has invested for growth through quality institutions while India has lost out and is oblivious to it.

Even in comparison to the engineering education system in India the IITs have become insignificant today. 10 years ago the IITs made up about 10% of India's engineering

output of human capital. Today they are less than 2% and declining further. India currently has about 3800 engineering colleges with an annual intake of 1.2 million, a size to rival China. Yes, about 50% of the colleges are of indifferent quality, some rank bad, but they are offering an answer to India's youth. About 1,000 of them are of reasonable quality, very many have improved over time. No university or college was founded great, they evolved over time, so there is hope for India that these bad colleges will provide the sinews for India's growth and answer the need of India's young. In the meantime, the IITs will live in their ivory tower and possibly become less and less relevant to India's needs as neither are they meeting India's need for more human capital nor producing the kind of PhDs India needs.

What needs to be done to change this? The government has all the answers setting up many eminent committees, the latest of which is the Anil Kakodkar Committee of which the author is a member. The solutions are known to all, the government, the policy makers, the academics and the intelligentsia. Total autonomy to the IITs, driven by a board of governors with a new vision, accountability through public opinion and transparency.

Yet there is resistance to change, from government for the fear of losing control, from some part of academia because they become more accountable and lose the shelter of blaming the government for all ills and for inadequate performance and from some opinion makers who believe that the existing feudal system should continue since they have a disproportionate influence on them.

The best solution is to open up the education system and allow competition, the dreaded word in academics, to come forth. India should revise her educational policies and allow the private sector to set up "innovation universities" granting them all that they need. Full autonomy, academic, administrative and financial to chart their own future. Some safeguards are needed, as this is a public good. A large corpus of say Rs 100 crore, an open merit based admission policy, a faculty compensation policy based on minimum UGC scales and an assurance that they will aim to be amongst the top 100 in the world over the next 25 years. To ensure access to the

merited we need a national scholarship scheme which will fund students. India needs to trust the genius of her citizens to create institutions that are world class and not look at them through myopic eyes with suspicion.

India's future is too important to be left to the benevolence of an apathetic, insensitive government which has destroyed academic excellence over the years, driven her young out and even today shows callous indifference. See the state of our universities today, so many have fallen from the high standards they had, see the state of the Presidency Colleges, it is indeed sad! Most policy makers and leaders have solved their personal issues by sending their children out to get a good education, so they are not impacted by the poor quality of higher education in India. It is the middle class and the poor who suffer, because they love their country more and see their future here; maybe they too want to take flight but do not have the resources to.

As the saying goes "Yankee go home, but take me with you." But will competition work? Yes, it will indeed. The engineering colleges have opened up, very large numbers set up by political influence and plain bribery but they have served another purpose. Today there is a flight to quality. The bad colleges are dying since students have a choice, they are voting with their feet. The good ones are expanding and seeing greater demand. The market mechanism has worked, not by design but by serendipity. So there is hope.

Look at various other sectors today. Bharti has made BSNL redundant and has given us a choice, Jet has overtaken Air India and given us a choice, the power system in Mumbai is still the best, and in education the Indian School of Business has turned our IIMs inside out. The IIMs actually want reform, expansion and are concerned about their future. Competition and an open liberal environment for higher education will work.

India's best higher education institution, the Indian Institute of Science, was started by a private citizen many years ago and is still the best we have. India's needs in higher education are too large to be met by the government, they need the genius of India's citizens to meet them.

Times of India ND 16/06/2011P-15

Indian univs' ranking in Asia slides

At 187 Position, Only IIT-Bombay Figures In The World's Top 200 Varsities

Hemali Chhapla | TNN

Mumbai: Not a single Indian university, including the IITs, has fared well in an all-Asian varsity ranking for 2011. IIT-Bombay is the only one to figure in the world top 200, at 187, lower than the previous year's rank of 163.

The QS Asian University rankings reveal a pathetic performance by domestically high-rated varsities in the state, with the University of Mumbai pegged the worst, though it set aside funds to better its ranking this year. A university founded merely two decades ago—The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology—has topped the charts, defying critics who claim that long-established universities have an insuperable advantage. It not only raced past its veteran neighbour, Hong Kong University, but is also the youngest among the top 100 QS World Ranking Asian Universities.

The University of Cam-



Academic Ladder

Institutes	Asian rank	World rank
IIT-Kanpur	36 (37)	249 (237)
IIT-Delhi	37 (39)	202 (181)
IIT-Bombay	38 (36)	187 (163)
IIT-Madras	43 (53)	262 (284)
IIT-Kharagpur	48 (57)	311 (335)
University of Pune	142 (109)	551-600 (501-600)
University of Mumbai	145 (96)	451-500 (401-500)

(no in brackets is the previous year's rank)

Top 5 World Universities

- 1 University of Cambridge, United Kingdom
- 2 Harvard University, United States
- 3 Yale University, United States
- 4 UCL (University College London), United Kingdom
- 5 Massachusetts Institute of Technology United States

Top 5 Asian Universities

- 1 The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, Hong Kong
- 2 University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong
- 3 National University of Singapore (NUS), Singapore
- 4 The University of Tokyo, Japan
- 5 The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong

bridge got a perfect 100, topping the world chart. "We are doing better than earlier. But at other places, they are improving a lot faster than us. So, we are not static; the number of publications has gone up and research funding has also improved," said IIT-Bombay director Devang Khakhar. About IIT-Bombay's rank, he said they had done "slightly worse" because student strength had gone up, but faculty numbers had not increased correspondingly.

All the seven old IITs have made it to the Asian universities ranking, but their ranks have slid. "Internationalization takes up 20% of the points. But we are not international; neither do we have international students nor do we have foreign faculty members. In terms of funds, China and Korea are higher than us. Lastly, we don't have medicine and law. So we lose points there too. We are starting off with a handicap," said IIT Madras director MS Ananth. "In terms of funding and opening

doors for foreigners, China has taken right steps." "Hong Kong's continued strong showing in the Asian rankings, with four universities in the top 20 and all six in the top 50, contrasts with continuing disappointment for mainland China," noted the analysis.

Although Peking and Tsinghua universities remain in the top 20, China has only 14 universities in the first 100, having made marginal progress since last year. The much smaller system in South Korea outperforms China. It has four institutions in the top 20, led by Seoul National University, and 16 in the top 100.

However, Richard Holmes, a frequent commentator on rankings, writing in University World News, had a different take, saying more Japanese universities were falling than rising, while Chinese and Korean varsities were on the rise. "This could be part of a permanent shift in the world balance of academic power."

Business Line ND 16/06/2011 P-9

India may host world's first Meta University by June next

Aditi Nigam

New Delhi, June 15

The world's first Meta University, to promote multi-disciplinary learning at the higher education level, may take off in India by June 2012.

The proposal, part of a concept note to promote innovation at the college and school levels, was recently submitted to the Union Human Resource Development Ministry by the National Innovation Council, headed by Mr Sam Pitroda.

"The Minister has green-lighted these (proposals) for immediate follow-up....Most of these require only marginal additional allocations as they can be woven into existing funding streams. Also these do not require policy changes or amendments in law and can be rolled out in academic year 2012," a source close to the development said.

According to the concept note, the Meta University will use the platform of the already established National Knowledge Network to create a "unified sensibility that combines intellect and emotion, analytics and synthesis, the right brain and left brain - attributes that foster innovation." The model is based on com-

ROAD TO INNOVATION

- Meta University to promote collaborative and multi-disciplinary learning using the National Knowledge Network
- Creation of a National Innovation Promotion Service to replace/add to National Service Scheme in Colleges
- Scholarships on the lines of the National Talent Search Scheme for National Innovation at school level
- Setting up Innovation Centres in each District Institute of Education and Training (for schools)
- Mapping of Local History, Ecology and Cultural Heritage by each high school in the country

binning "collaborative learning" and "multi-disciplinary learning". In other words, the Internet and the Web will provide the communication infrastructure, while a network of universities will offer courses in various disciplines.

The idea is to allow students and teachers to access and share teaching material, scholarly publications, research work, scientific work, virtual experiments etc, says the concept note. Also, students enrolled in a primary college or university will be able to pursue courses in other universities and colleges.

"It will be possible for an engineering student from, say, IIT Kanpur to also enrol for a course in ancient history from Jawaharlal Nehru University

or a mathematics student from Indian Institute of Science can pursue a course in comparative literature from Jadavpur University," says the note.

Sources said once the proposal is finalised, a draft memorandum of understanding will be offered to participating institutions.

In a month's time, a mentor group comprising heads of institutions and thought-leaders in education will also be created.

Among the other proposals at the school level are scholarships for innovation, setting up of specialised centres and setting up a National Innovation Promotion Scheme on the lines of the National Service Scheme in colleges.

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100% cutoffs irrational, says Sibal

Summons V-C Amid Calls For Reforms

Akshaya Mukul, Manas h Pratim Gohain & Neha Pushkarna | TNN

New Delhi: The 100% cutoff announced by Shri Ram College of Commerce for non-commerce students sparked outraged calls for educational reforms, and HRD minister Kapil Sibal acknowledged it was "irrational" and "affects the credi-

MISSION ADMISSION: P 4 & 6

► Hype unfortunate, says V-C, P 6

► Engg, mgmt colleges cut back, P 9

bility of the entire education system".

In a swift reaction, the minister called DU vice-chancellor Dinesh Singh to his office to understand the process

I was sad to hear it. I want to reach out to parents and students and tell them don't worry...we will take care of this irrationality. We are on your side — Kapil Sibal | HRD MINISTER



Last year, students who scored more than 95% were 200. This year there are 800... Therefore, colleges are being cautious in the first cutoff — Dinesh Singh | DU VC



Worry? I'm terrified for my sons because in five years, when Zamir (Omar's son) moves to college, the cutoffs will be even more insane — Omar Abdullah

— Omar Abdullah

J&K CM ON TWITTER

and requested him and the college to "fix rational cutoffs for admission". Sibal, however, said his ministry or even the DU had little say over admissions.

Times View

The idea of a 100% cutoff seems absurd but it is pointless to paint the college or the university as the villain of the piece. The fact that cutoffs have reached levels which would have seemed ridiculous some years ago only points to a deeper malaise, which is the severe lack of quality colleges compared to the scale of the demand for them. As long as we have a situation in which lakhs are aspiring to get quality higher education but the system can cater to only a few thousands, such absurdities will abound. The answer is to have many more good colleges. It is clearly easier said than done, but we must at least make a beginning in that direction.

Sibal asked parents and students not to worry. "We will take care of this irrationality," he said. The minister did not elaborate on how he would do this.

Hindustan Times ND 16/06/2011 P-4

Colleges should relook at cut-offs, says V-C

Mallica Joshi

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NEW DELHI: In what could be termed only as the fall out of the 'irrational' cut-offs in colleges this year, DU administration could intervene and help colleges set realistic cut-offs from the coming year.

Indicating that a change can be expected, DU Vice-Chancellor Dinesh Singh said that statutes that prevent the university from interfering in setting cut-offs may be altered.

But colleges have not taken this reaction seriously.

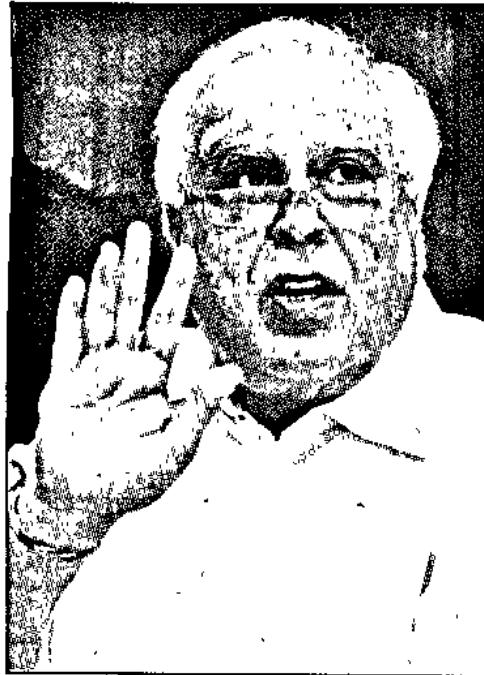
"There are more than 60 colleges in the university which declare cut-offs. The university will not be able to intervene in the functioning of each one of these. If something wrong has happened it should be corrected but this is no solution. This is just a knee-jerk reaction," said VK Kwatra, principal, Hansraj College.

"The 100% benchmark was set only by two colleges for two courses and that too for a small section of students. This is not a trend in any way. The subsequent cut-offs will show this," Kwatra added.

Under the current university and college rules, colleges have a free hand in declaring cut-offs. This time the cut-offs have been unrealistic, especially in North Campus colleges.

College administrations maintain that they have been cautious in declaring cut-offs as they don't have the data about the number of students seeking admission in colleges this time.

Also, the fear of having to give admission to more students than the



■ After the first list came out, Kapil Sibal declared that the ministry will take care of this 'irrationality' of 100% cut-off. HT FILE PHOTO

sanctioned number of seats is plaguing most colleges.

"If the university want to intervene, they are most welcome. Since we did not have any kind of data, we declared high cut-offs so that a sea of students doesn't descend on the college tomorrow. If the university thinks it can do a better job, they are welcome to do it," said Bhim Sen Singh, principal, Kirori Mal College.

The vice-chancellor, meanwhile, said that he would advise all colleges to relook their cut-offs this year.

"This is not the best of situations. No student should be demoralised. We will advise colleges to be more sensitive," said Singh.

Cutting Off Competition!

Calling SRCC move 'irrational' & 'unfortunate', Sibal asks DU V-C to take action; Congress 'hopes anomalies are set right', BJP calls the situation 'ridiculous'

OUR POLITICAL BUREAU NEW DELHI

HRD minister Kapil Sibal has criticised the Shri Ram College of Commerce, or SRCC, for setting its cutoff for admission to the B Com (H) course at 100%. Describing it as "unfortunate" and "irrational", Sibal has asked Delhi University Vice-Chancellor Dinesh Singh to step in and remedy the situation. Sibal's concern has been echoed by political parties too.

The Congress has expressed concern over the new cutoff for humanities and science students applying for commerce courses. Party spokesperson Jayanthi Natarajan said: "Some serious anomalies must be there. HRD minister has taken note of it. We hope the anomalies are set right. Certainly, it would not be correct for students to suffer unnecessarily."

The BJP described the situation as "ridiculous". Party spokesperson Nirmala Sitharaman said: "It is ridiculous. This means that students from some streams cannot get admission to certain courses. The Delhi University should look into the matter."

In a bid to reassure students and parents, Sibal said: "I was sad to hear it. I want to reach out to parents and students and tell them don't worry. We will take care of this irrationality. We are on your side."

The minister took the opportunity to push forward the agenda to reform the college admission process. The ministry has already sought public feedback on the idea of a national testing system for admission to higher education or tertiary sector. A paper, 'National Test Scheme for admission into tertiary Education in India: Underlying Philosophy and Principles' — prepared by a committee headed by T Ramasami, secretary, department of science and technology —, gives a broad overview of the principles that will govern the proposed system. The ministry has put up the paper for public feedback.

The committee has argued that a national testing system would help increase the spread of students who can seek admission to higher education institutions. "Majority of youth living in smaller towns and far-flung places as well as eco-

"I was sad to hear it. I want to reach out to parents and students and tell them don't worry. We will take care of this irrationality. We are on your side... I am informed by the DU V-C that there is only one student in the entire list who has got a 100% mark in science. He may never go to commerce. The idea is to exclude everybody in the science stream"

KAPIL SIBAL
HRD Minister

nomically weaker segments of society are not able to join the competitive stream today... the present system seems to be unwittingly promoting a societal behaviour and mindset towards differentiation rather than integration," the report states.

Meanwhile, responding to the minister's intervention, DU V-C Dinesh Singh has promised the government and the students that he would look into the matter and make sure that the cutoffs are revised downwards. Singh said the varsity was looking at reforming the processes.

Students who have not studied any of the papers related to the commerce stream, that is accountancy, business studies, economics and maths, at the class XII level are required to have scored 100% to gain admission to the B Com (H) course at SRCC. Students who have studied any one of these subjects are required to have scored 96% to be considered for admission. In effect, science students, who have studied physics, chemistry, biology and English, will find it next to impossible to gain admission. Students from the humanities stream are anyhow not considered for admission to undergraduate courses in commerce and science streams.

"I am informed by the Delhi University Vice-Chancellor that there is only one student in the entire list who has got a 100% mark in science. He may never go to commerce. The idea is to exclude everybody in the science stream and not to al-

"The performance of students has been extraordinary this year, that's why the cutoff is so high. There is nothing unfortunate. It is fortunate that students in this country are performing so well. The criterion is an old practice that has been followed, so nothing like that it has been done deliberately to keep the non-commerce students out of SRCC"

PC JAIN
SRCC Principal

low them an opportunity. This is completely irrational," Sibal said.

Sibal said setting a high cut-off for science students for admission to commerce courses was putting a barrier to keep science students away. Sibal said: "We cannot slot children in a way that those who are in science can't go to commerce."

However, SRCC Principal Dr PC Jain was not perturbed by the HRD minister's intervention. Instead, Jain argued that cutoffs were high because students had performed exceptionally well in their school leaving examination. "The performance of students has been extraordinary this year; that's why the cutoff is so high. There is nothing unfortunate. In fact, it is very fortunate that students in this country are performing so well. The criterion is an old practice that has been followed, so nothing like that it has been done deliberately to keep the non-commerce students out of SRCC," Jain explained.

Even as DU V-C reiterated Jain's rationale for a high cutoff, Singh assured that cut-off marks would be brought down subsequently. "Last year in CBSE examination, students who scored more than 95% were 200. This year there are 800. There are high scoring groups now. Therefore, colleges are being cautious in the first cut-off. The high cutoffs are because of very high percentages. The students have received very good marks in their boards," Singh said.

Colleges justify 100% cut-off norm

Mallica Joshi

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NEW DELHI: Shri Ram College for Commerce (SRCC) and Lady Shri Ram College (LSR) have set impossible targets for some students in the first cut-off list this year, literally.

SRCC requires a 100% best of four percentage from non-commerce students for admission to B.Com (honours). LSR has the same requirement from commerce students who want admission in Psychology (honours).

But students who can meet this criterion do not exist as far as those who took the CBSE and ISC exams are concerned. The best of four percentage must also include one language.

While this is English in LSR, it can be either Hindi or English in SRCC. Out of the 7,69,929 students who gave CBSE boards this year, no one scored a perfect score in either of the two languages.

At SRCC on Wednesday, a student from Chennai, whose best of four percentage was 99.25%, was the highest scorer seeking admission.

But colleges don't think this criterion is too stringent. "The strategy is to

The strategy is to rule out students as we have a limited seats and a lot of aspirants who are keen on taking admission. This (100) percentage is just for non-commerce students

PC JAIN
principal, SRCC

rule out students as we have a limited number of seats and a lot of aspirants who are keen on taking admission. This percentage is just for non-commerce students," said PC Jain, principal SRCC.

Unless a student has scored a perfect ton in either of the two languages in any state board, no seats will be filled under this category. The students who are manning the admission help desk are also sceptical about meeting any such student. But that does not guarantee that SRCC will come out with a second cut-off list. Since the cut-off for commerce students is 96%, there are chances that the college won't come out with a second list.

At LSR, including English in your best of four subjects is mandatory. So

There's a race to get into a college like LSR for status, but that is unfair. The 100% cut-off mark for psychology is to deter commerce students who consider course a secondary option,

UJJAINI RAY
media coordinator, LSR

no student, who has studied in CBSE or ISC board, will be able to meet the stringent 100% cut-off for commerce students.

"Psychology is a very niche course and we do not get many commerce students as it is. Those who score such good marks in commerce take up courses such as B.Com. and Economics," said Ujjaini Ray, media coordinator, LSR.

"It is imperative that students learn to give a preference to course over college. There is a race to get into a college like LSR for the status value, but that is unfair to those genuinely interested. The 100% cut off mark for psychology is to deter commerce students who consider course as a secondary option," Ray added.



■ Even students manning help desks are sceptical about meeting anyone with a perfect score. JASJEET PLAHA/HT PHOTO