

# Newspaper Clips

## March 7, 2013

Business Line ND 7/03/2013

P6

### The online revolution in higher education

Thomas L. Friedman

I just spent the last two days at a great conference convened by MIT and Harvard on "Online Learning and the Future of Residential Education" aka "How can colleges charge \$50,000 a year if my kid can learn it all free from massive open online courses?"

You may think this MOOCs revolution is hyped, but my driver in Boston disagrees. You see, I was picked up at Logan Airport by my old friend Michael Sandel, who teaches the famous Socratic, 1,000-student "Justice" course at Harvard, which is launching March 12 as the first humanities offering on the MIT-Harvard edX online learning platform. Sandel had recently been in South Korea, where his Justice course has been translated into Korean and shown on national television. His online Justice lectures,

with Chinese subtitles, have already had more than 20 million views on Chinese websites, which prompted the *China Daily* to note that "Sandel has the kind of popularity in China usually reserved for Hollywood movie stars and NBA players."

OK, not every professor will develop a global following, but the MOOCs revolution, which will go through many growing pains, is here and is real. These were my key take-aways from the conference:

#### NEW PRIORITIES

Institutions of higher learning must move, as the historian Walter Russell Mead puts it, from a model of "time served" to a model of "stuff learned." Because increasingly the world does not care what you know. Everything is on Google. The world only cares, and will only pay for, what you can do with what you

know. And therefore it will not pay for a C(PLUS) in chemistry, just because your state college considers that a passing grade and was willing to give you a diploma that says so. We're moving to a more competency-based world where there will be less interest in how you acquired the competency in an online course, at a four-year-college or in a company-administered class, and more demand to prove that you mastered the competency.

Therefore, we have to get beyond the current system of information and delivery --- the professional "sage on the stage" and students taking notes, followed by a superficial assessment, to one in which students are asked and empowered to master more basic material online at their own pace, and the classroom becomes a place where the application of that knowledge can be honed through lab experiments

and discussions with the professor.

There seemed to be a strong consensus that this "blended model" combining online lectures with a teacher-led classroom experience was the ideal. Last fall, San Jose State used the online lectures and interactive exercises of MIT's introductory online Circuits and Electronics course. Students would watch the MIT lectures and do the exercises at home, and then come to class, where the first 15 minutes were reserved for questions and answers with the San Jose State professor, and the last 45 were devoted to problem solving and discussion. Preliminary numbers indicate that those passing the class went from nearly 60 per cent to about 90 per cent. And since this course was the first step to a degree in science and technology, it meant that one-third more students potentially moved on toward a degree and career in

that field.

We demand that plumbers and kindergarten teachers be certified to do what they do, but there is no requirement that college professors know how to teach. No more. The world of MOOCs is creating a competition that will force every professor to improve his or her pedagogy or face an online competitor.

Bottom line: There is still huge value in the residential college experience and the teacher-student and student-student interactions it facilitates. But to thrive, universities will have to nurture even more of those unique experiences while blending in technology to improve education outcomes in measurable ways at lower costs. We still need more research on what works, but standing still is not an option.

— **New York Times News Service**

Times of India ND 7/03/2013

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### UGC sets up committee to examine whether NET exam serves any purpose

#### It devalues critical thinking

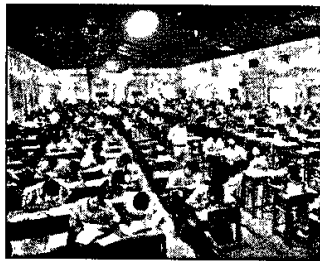
The University Grants Commission has set up a new committee to examine whether the National Eligibility Test (NET) is actually effective in its role as a gatekeeper for all those who seek to teach in the Indian university system. Actually, the wonder is not so much that the authority of the NET has been supreme ever since it was instituted in the 1980s, but that this has been so despite the many second thoughts that the UGC itself has had about it in the interim.

In 1993, UGC decided to give PhD and MPhil degree-holders exemption from the NET, because these are the highest degrees in academics, and thereby denote lofty standards in and of themselves. In 2002, the blanket exemption was withdrawn. In 2006, a concerned committee recommended scrapping the NET, but all that was once again scrapped was the requirement for PhDs and MPhils to take the NET. In 2009, MPhils lost the exemption. In 2012, qualifying scores were changed across general, SC/ST and OBC categories after the NET results were published!

It's education that has been the casualty of UGC's whimsy. It has been pushing for inter-disciplinary courses for students even while promoting a multiple-choice exam for teachers. With critical think-

#### ■TIMES VIEW■

ing at one end and rote cramming on the other, UGC has basically set up an unworkable equation. Universities set up as centres of excellence need to be autonomous, and an essential component of that has to be autonomy in selecting their teachers. Using the NET as gatekeeper relies on a centralised, colonial model of university education that is obsolete. So let NET retreat into limbo. And shed no tears for the death of its 'common national yardstick', for higher education is actually about creating excellence, also known as distinction.



#### A central eligibility test is essential

Appointing a committee to review the efficacy of the NET and quality of the candidates is welcome, as there is always scope for fine-tuning a three-decade-old test for teacher selection in poor quality. Distance education courses conferring MPhil degrees sprang up and third-rate universities spewed out ghost-written theses and PhD degrees. Consequently the Mungekar committee was forced to recommend restoration of NET in its final report in 2008. This reaffirmed the need for a base criterion for appointment of entry-level teachers in a country where quality of research degrees is highly skewed.

#### ■COUNTERVIEW■

Pyarajal Raghavan

Though critics might argue that NET leads to excessive centralisation and infringes on the autonomy of higher education institutions, the ground realities are very different. One reason for the poor state of higher education is that teaching appointments are made on the basis of recommendations of political leaders, powerful bureaucrats and nepotistic academics. In fact, except in a few top universities and colleges, such weighty 'recommendations' or money — neither of which have anything to do with scholastic or professional aptitude — are used to secure teaching appointments. Doing away with the NET will only further reinforce these trends.

And earlier efforts to do away with NET were equally unsuccessful. In fact, the Bhalchandra Mungekar committee had recommended automatic eligibility of all MPhil and PhD holders for teaching posts and exempted them from taking NET in its interim report in 2006. The result was a sharp spurt in MPhil and PhD theses of

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**छात्र समागम में अभिभूत  
हुए सुब्बाराव और महेश  
नई दिल्ली। आईआईटी कानपुर द्वारा  
यहां भूतपूर्व छात्रों के लिए आयोजित  
समारोह में शामिल होकर आरबीआई  
गवर्नर डी. सुब्बाराव और केंट  
आरओ के चेयरमैन महेश गुप्ता  
अभिभूत हो गए। इनके अलावा 60 व  
70 के दशक के पूर्व छात्रों ने पुरानी  
यादों को फिर से ताजा किया।**

Hindustan Times Ranchi 06-03-2013 P-2

# Lawyer's human generator to find place at IIT fest

**Anbesh Roy Choudhury**

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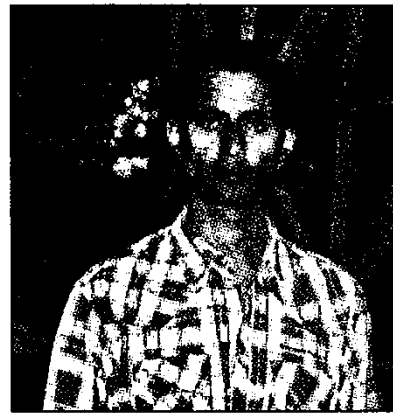
**RANCHI:** Sujeet Kumar Singh, a lawyer-turned-green-energy-crusader, does not have the resources or the technical background but has achieved a milestone by inventing a human-powered generator.

This feat of Singh, a resident of Piska More, has helped him book a berth at India's top tech fest Techkriti to be organised at IIT Kanpur from March 14-17.

"The generator was built at a truck workshop," said the Ranchi-based lawyer, who has beaten teams from IIT Mumbai, IIT Guwahati, Bhaba Institute of Technology, IIT Kanpur and 48 others for a place in the last 13 at the competition.

Giving details about his invention, which he calls Indo-Rongo, Singh said, "As it uses human force, the machine could in the long term curtail migration through employment generation, aid labour intensive projects under MGNREGA and also come handy in agriculture works."

His machine is based on the dynamo concept (a generator which produces direct current with the help of a commutator) found on a bicycle. Instead of paddling, a person needs to move a lever up and down. This in turn moves an axle, which



■ **Sujeet Kumar Singh invented a human-powered generator.**

charges the dynamo producing electricity.

"There is not much exertion and even a woman or a child can produce electricity without much stress," said Singh.

According to his concept paper, a person working for four hours can earn Rs 240 a day or Rs 3 per minute. "If the size of the machine is enlarged, with a larger alternator and better dynamo, one can light up a village. If electricity is sold at Rs 8 per unit, a person can earn a substantial daily income," said Singh.

He added, "In my first exhibition in IIT Mumbai, a gearbox, which makes certain activities effortless, was given the top score in inventions. I am trying to get it patented but due to financial crisis the entire process is in limbo," said Singh.

Hindustan Times Jaipur 06-03-2013 P-3

# A year on, Kota IIT remains a pipe dream

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**KOTA:** In the 2011 state budget, the Rajasthan government had announced the establishment of Indian Institute of Information and Technology (IIIT) in Kota. But the institute is far from becoming a reality in Kota, even as the state government is set to present its last financial budget.

Chief minister Ashok Gehlot had announced that IIIT Kota would be set up, in lieu of proposed Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) from Kota to Jodhpur. But while IIT Jodhpur has already started functioning, the proposed IIIT project in Kota is moving a snail's pace.

The proposed institute in Kota was to be established in (public-private partnership) mode.

Last year, the state government made agreements with industrial groups, including Arcelor Mittal India Limited; Hindustan Motors, New Delhi; Genpact India, Jaipur and Vakrangee Software Limited, Mumbai for establishment of IIIT in Kota. Nearly 100 acres of land was also earmarked for the institute in Ranpur area of Kota last year. Since then, however, there has been no progress in the project and it has been caught in procedural formalities.

The construction work of the proposed IIIT can only start after the visit of team of

**THE SETTING UP OF AN INDIAN INSTITUTE OF INFORMATION AND TECHNOLOGY IN KOTA WAS ANNOUNCED IN THE LAST BUDGET**

experts from the Union ministry of human resource development (MHRD) for inspection of the site. But the visit has already been postponed twice in the past few months.

The acting district collector of Kota, Rakesh Jaiswal, said the land had been selected for IIIT in Kota and the project would move ahead after the visit of the MHRD team.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MLA from Kota South, Om Birla, said he had recently written to the state government about the establishment of IIIT in Kota.

According to Birla, the state government replied that the approval from the Union government for IIIT Kota had been received, but there was no deadline set for the establishment of the institute.

Birla said it was unfortunate that two years since the announcement of the institute, no staff and director for IIIT had yet been announced.

"The state government snatched IIT from Kota, and is now delaying establishment of IIIT here," Birla alleged.

## IIT-K SCIENTIST'S RESEARCH



- Prof Durgesh C Rai's research concluded that intervention material used by the ASI for the facelift is not compatible with the original material – posing a serious threat to the structures' survival.
- The ASI should use more lime with better hydraulic property, if they want these heritage monuments to long last, he suggested.
- The revelation assumes significance considering the existing threat of ruination to many monuments either because of neglect or encroachment.

HT Bangalore

# IIM-B student prefers entrepreneurship to job

BANGALORE — Breaking from convention, a bright student of the state-run Indian Institute of Management-Bangalore (IIM-B) has preferred to be an entrepreneur in the education sector.

Opting out of placements for a lucrative job voluntarily, Aditya Kulkarni of the 2011-13 batch at the B-school in post-graduate management programme has co-founded 'Learning Outcomes' start-up with a view to making child assess-

ment in schools a holistic process.

"Though a few standard tests to evaluate a child's performance are in vogue, there is a need for an effective diagnostic tool. Our aim is to make assessments at schools a pedagogical tool for measurement," Kulkarni said in a statement here yesterday.

Kulkarni has roped in Rishikar, an IIT-Chennai alumnus, to set up the nascent venture.

"Schools have ample data on their wards' performance but do not use for identifying their capabilities and help them... We do that by analysing data and generating results to be used as a feedback mechanism to complete the learning loop," Kulkarni asserted.

The company also plans to engage teachers and parents in the growth of their wards.

The start-up, which has tied up with select schools in

Pune, will expand its operations to schools in Bangalore and Mumbai later this year.

The N S Raghavan Centre for Entrepreneurial Learning, an incubation centre set up by former Infosys co-founder (Raghavan), provided monetary and advisory help to Kulkarni in setting up the venture.

After graduating in electronics from BITS Pilani in Rajasthan, Kulkarni joined the B-school and interned with the Planning Com-

mission in education vertical when the 12th five-year plan (2012-17) was being finalised, skipping summer placement in 2011-12.

"I have set out to do what I love most... seeing children actually transforming their lives for the better in schools," Kulkarni added.

About 140 firms from the world over, including from India are participating in the campus final placements to the 2013 batch of 380 students. — IANS