Newspaper Clips
May 9, 2011

Times of India ND 9/05/2011 P-2

All's not well at IIT-D: Typhoid cases on the rise, say students

Durgesh Nandan Jha | TNN

New Delhi: Students at IIT-Delhi have been falling ill. The reason, they claim, is the contaminated water in their hostels, which has resulted in many coming down with typhoid. College authorities, however, deny the charge. Surender Prasad, director IIT-D, said that though some cases of typhoid and gastroenteritis have been reported, there is no outbreak of typhoid.

"Mosquito-breeding has gone up this year. And there have been stray cases of typhoid and gastroenteritis from some hostels. But the scenario is not alarming. There is nothing wrong with the drinking water," said Prasad.

According to M V Prasad, whose son was hospitalized in the middle of his exams, students are scared. "My son studies chemical engineering. He could not give all his papers due to the illness and is now recovering at a hospital here in Vijaywada, Andhra Pradesh. I decided to bring him home because the medical care at the institute was insufficient," he said.

Gangadhar K, another parent, said that his son had been ill for the past two weeks, but the college did not inform him. "He somehow managed to take his exams and returned home. I am going to complain to the administration and the HRD minister about the poor state of affairs," said Gangadhar.

A student said he has big mosquito-bite marks all over his body. "I have just recovered from typhoid. Two of my friends are still ill. Last year, there were a lot of dengue cases. All this affects our academic performance and the administration must take steps to tackle this," he said. Many students said they were now buying mineral water from the market. "It costs a lot, but we have no choice," said a student.

Shashi Mathur, dean, student's welfare at IIT-Delhi, said that the college had looked into the complaints about water contamination and found the water to be safe. "Water samples from Jwalamukhi, Kumaon, Vindhyachal, Shivalik, Zanskar and Satpura hostels were tested at our environmental lab and they were found to be potable. The students also got the tests done privately and the results were the same," he said.

Nano fabrication at IIT

WITH ITS CENTRE FOR NANOFABRICATION, IIT DELHI IS FOCUSING ON DEVELOPING NEW NANO-DEVICES THAT ARE BENEFICIAL TO THE SOCIETY. VISHAKHA SHARMA REPORTS

NANOTECHNOLOGY has been prevalent in India for more than a decade now. This technology offers a range of career opportunities for students in domestic as well as international markets. Also, various Indian institutes have introduced degree courses in nanotechnology at both the undergraduate and postgraduate level.

To develop the aspects of nanotechnology, the government had started setting up nanoscience units in the country. IIT-Delhi is one such centre where a nanoscience unit was started around five years ago.

VR Mehta, professor of physics at IIT Delhi, says, "The implications of nanotechnology can be found in telecommunications, computing, aerospace, solar energy, and environment. Around five years ago, a nanoscience unit was started in our institute. Now we have recently started a nanofabrication centre around six months back to foster and expand all aspects of nanotechnology, which have the potential to benefit the country."

The new centre will require around five years to be complete. "We have to establish all facilities on nanotechnology like fabrication of nano-devices, lithography, electron beam lithography, etc. Establishing all this would require two years."

The nanofabrication centre, informs Mehta, focuses on looking at non-silicon devices. This centre has been funded by the ministry of information technology.

As to the focus areas of the centre, Mehta adds, "At the nanofabrication centre, we will be looking at four to five areas of technology such as fuel cells, nano-sensors, biological sensors etc. Our effort is to make all this possible at a low cost so that it is beneficial to all.

SUBJECT WISE

■ Nanoscience and technology is a minor area, which any student — irrespective of the degree one is pursuing at IIT — can choose as a special subject

■ Since nanotechnology is primarily a combination of physics, chemistry, biology, it is not taught as a specific course. A student, therefore, can opt for nanoscience and technology along with a degree course and complete this special subject in a period of four years

■ Nanoscience and technology requires nine courses, which a student needs to study and clear. However, the degree awarded to students will mention that one had cleared this minor area. There is no added fee charged for this

IIT-K BUILDING WILL BE READY BY NEXT YEAR

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A STUDY-CUM-PLACEMENT EXTENSION CENTRE IN NOIDA WILL IMPROVE PLACEMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR ITS STUDENTS

Shraddha Maheshwari

The Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur, needs no introduction. In order to increase the placement probabilities of its students it has decided to open a study-cum-placement extension centre in Sector 62 of Noida.

The institute was allotted 5 acres in Sector 62 a few years ago and work on a boundary wall has been completed in the first phase. Now, in the second phase, the academic block, students' hostel and auditorium will be completed. The project is expected to be complete by the end of next year.

The centre will not only be used to hold short-term courses ranging from six months to one-and-a-half years but several national and international conferences will also be organized here. The centre will make it convenient for recruiters who find it difficult to go to Kanpur for campus recruitment.

Engg schools to take Metro course?

TRAINING ON TRACK
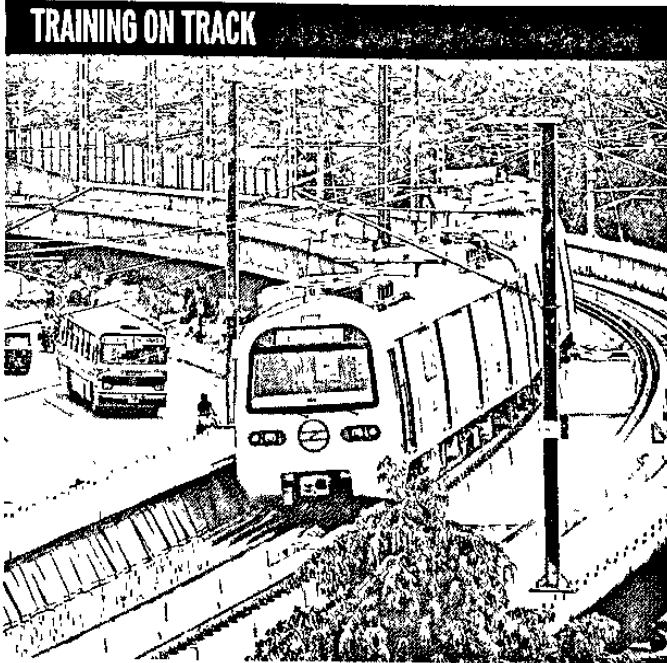
■ Following the success of the Delhi metro, Mumbai, Bangalore, Chennai have already started work on projects. **FILE**

■ Delhi Metro Rail Corporation MD E Sreedharan has written to the HRD ministry seeking assistance in creating a cadre of engineers with specialised skills needed for metro projects

■ The ministry may ask the AICTE to prepare a curriculum
■ IIT-Delhi and IIT-Madras are already offering special training programmes for Metro employees

SPECIALISED HRD ministry likely to okay curriculum on metro rail engineering

Charu Sudan Kasturi
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NEW DELHI: India's engineering colleges may soon offer dedicated courses in metro rail engineering to meet a fast growing demand for trained manpower at a time when city after city is adopting Delhi's metro model.

Delhi Metro Rail Corporation managing director E Sreedharan has written to the HRD ministry seeking assistance in creating a cadre of engineers with specialised skills needed for metro projects, said officials.

The Metro chief has asked the ministry to convince all IITs to start metro engineering programmes. The ministry is likely to ask the All India Council for Technical Education — the country's apex technical education regulator — to prepare a curriculum that all engineering colleges recognised by it can use, source said.

India has close to 3,000 engineering colleges that are recognised by AICTE.

IIT Delhi and IIT Madras are already offering special training programmes for Metro employees. But Sreedharan, in his letter, has asked the Centre to start full-fledged courses for all IITs students. Ministry sources said the IITs may, however, not be in a position to meet Sreedharan's demand soon.

Unlike other engineering colleges, the IITs, by their very mandate, do not take up highly specialised sectoral courses, officials said. But the AICTE can both prepare a curriculum and legitimise its introduction in other recognised engineering colleges.

Sreedharan has pointed to the increase in demand for trained metro rail personnel likely over the next few years.

Following the success of the Delhi metro, Mumbai, Bangalore, Chennai and Hyderabad have already started work on projects to ease their traffic clogs.

IIT Mandi Gets Ministry Nod for Forest Land

URMI A GOSWAMI
NEW DELHI

The delay in setting up a permanent campus for IIT Mandi due to land unavailability will be a thing of the past. The Environment Ministry on Friday cleared the diversion of 308 acres of forest land for the IIT, which will specialise in "environmentally-sound infrastructure development for the Himalayan region."

The Himachal Pradesh Government will now have to submit a compliance report before the final forest clearance is given. As a part of the compliance, the claims under the forest rights act will need to be settled. The clearance was given after the state government reworked its proposal to reduce the forest area that was required. This is in line with a recent Environment Ministry order to ensure that only absolutely essential amount of forest land is diverted for non-forest purposes. The earlier proposal for the diversion of 338 acres of forest land

had been rejected by the ministry on February 3.

The IIT Mandi campus will host 8,000 students, 800 faculty members and 1,400 non-teaching staff. The campus will be spread over a total area of 501 acres, of which 308 acres is forest area. Dense forest accounts for 7.5 acres of the total diverted forest land. Forest density in the balance of 300.5 acres is less than 0.1. The ministry has stressed that the dense forest area be not utilised for construction, instead be used for landscaping and beautification.

Environment Ministry has cleared the diversion of 308 acres of forest land for setting up a permanent campus for IIT Mandi

The Human Resources Development Ministry, which will set up the IIT, will also be required to undertake compensatory forestation in 618 acres, which is double the land allocated of degraded forest land. This is over and above the money that the government will have to deposit for the diversion of forest land. As a part of the campus

plan, the Environment Ministry has asked for the inclusion of a forest office "for raising nursery and undertaking horticultural plantation in the campus." Other conditions of the clearance include soil conservation, a minimal tree felling, and protection and conservation of wildlife in the high altitude areas. It has suggested that IIT Mandi explore the possibility of adopting these villages for permanent livelihood alternatives "as well as taking care of their fuelwood, fodder, and other needs."

The slow pace of setting up permanent campuses for the eight new IITs at Ropar, Bhubaneswar, Gandhinagar, Hyderabad, Patna, Jodhpur, Mandi and Indore has been a cause of concern for HRD Ministry.

The IIT Gandhinagar campus is stuck as of the 400 acres identified by the Gujarat Government, 200 acres belong to the Union Agriculture Ministry, which is reluctant to hand over this land. Human Resource Development Minister Kapil Sibal has asked state officials to sort out the issue with the Agriculture Ministry.

IIT-Bombay to start masters in n-engineering

MIHIKA BASU
MUMBAI, MAY 8

AMIDST concerns about India's nuclear programme in the wake of the Fukushima crisis, the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Bombay, is launching a new masters programme with specialisation in nuclear engineering this year. Approved recently, the institute plans to take in only eight students for the course in the first year.

Professor S L Bapat who heads the IIT's Mechanical Engineering Department, which will run the course, said the programme was under consideration ever since India decided to go in for nuclear power generation in a big way. "There is a huge need for trained personnel in the area of nuclear energy and reactor operation as it requires specific inputs and expertise. There are very few specialised courses in nuclear engineering. We have previously conducted some courses in this area. We, therefore, aim to provide skilled engineers and this is important as safety of nuclear power plants have assumed greater significance now," said Bapat.

The programme will focus on nuclear reactor engineering and safety, thermal engineering, removal of heat generated by nuclear reactions and other critical aspects. While the student intake will be increased in the subsequent years. the curriculum will be updated as and when required. Some fellowships will also be offered by the Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL) and the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB).

As conventional energy sources like coal and oil will become extinct in a few decades, one has to look for the alternative sources, he said. "Other sources like solar thermal plants can also supplement, but they cannot be a replacement for large capacity thermal power plants as major sources of electricity generation," Bapat added.

FEWER APPLICANTS FOR BARC COURSE

The number of applications for the "orientation course for engineering graduates and science postgraduates (OCES)" conducted by the five training schools of the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) has dipped by over 50 per cent compared to last year. The OCES programme is a one-year course and on successful completion of training, candidates join as scientific officers in one of units of the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE).

The number of candidates registering for the course this year was 41,800 as compared to 88,000 for the 2010-11 academic year. The applications last year, in fact, had seen a huge jump of nearly 200 per cent over 2009-10. BARC had then said that renewed interest in tapping nuclear energy and focus on the Indo-US civil nuclear deal were responsible for the increase.

BARC officials denied the possibility that the dip this year could be a fallout of the Fukushima crisis. "The fall in the number of applications is linked with job market conditions. The fluctuations are wild at times. Fukushima could not have any influence on the number of applications. This is because the issues raised by Fukushima are in the domain of policy formulation and do not concern a graduating student whose concern is to get a job," said R R Puri, head of BARC's human resource development division.

'Counselling could have saved my son's life'

Father of IIT-M student who hanged himself says proper inquiry needed, will approach NHRC in the matter

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, MAY 8

ON the afternoon of May 4 , minutes before he hanged himself, 24-year-old Nitin Kumar Reddy, student of Mechanical Engineering at IIT Chennai, wrote an e-mail to his parents asking for forgiveness. Nitin was told that day he would not be able to graduate in May with the rest of his batchmates.

"Dad-Sorry I couldn't be a better son to you...all you asked for was my betterment and I couldn't give it to you...I have failed you dad and I am so sorry about it. I cannot show my face to you," he wrote.

Nitin was the second student to commit suicide in IIT Chennai in the last three months.

On Sunday, Nitin's father A Lakhsmana Murthy (59) said the death could have been prevented had the college authorities taken notice of the boy's condition and counselled him.

Murthy said the IIT-M administration and Nitin's guide, P V Manivannan, should have informed him and his son earlier about the project's extension.

Murthy added that he wanted to avert such incidents in the future by making universities review their process of evaluation of students and by focussing on the need for counselling students.

Murthy said the suicide was triggered by the fact Nitin was about to lose a job offer made by an MNC due to the extension. "His friends told me he had to submit his project a few days ago, but could not complete it on time due to some problems. His project would have taken two more weeks to be completed, but one of his professors threw him out of the class. The HOD then told him that his project was extended by six months," said Murthy.

On May 4, Nitin had called up his father and told him about the extension. As he sounded depressed, Murthy said he tried to console his son and told him he would come to Chennai the next morning and talk to his teachers. A few hours later, he got a call from Nitin's local guardian informing him about the suicide.

"If only the professor had counselled him, Nitin would have been alive. I want a proper inquiry into the matter," he said.

IIT suicide: Kin calls for exam system change

AGE CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

May 8: Dr. A. Lakshmana Murthy,whose son A. Nitin Kumar Reddy (24), a final year student of M. Tech (mechanical) in IIT Chennai who committed suicide in his hostel room on Wednesday, said such suicides could have been avoided if the process of evaluation of students and announcement of their results be thoroughly reviewed.

Dr Murthy is working in the ministry of defence while his wife A. Sailaja is an employee of Andhra government, currently posted in Hyderabad.

The grieving father of the IIT student on Sunday also raised several questions pertaining to the evaluation procedure and the role of professors.

"The process of evaluation of students and announcement of their results should be thoroughly reviewed and necessary corrective measures should be put in place to prevent further loss of young promising lives. It is also requested to see whether the professors are objective while judging the students or they are selective in their approach. If any professor is found to be not acting objectively, he or she should be punished in accordance with the law," he said.

"What action is contemplated against people or concerned teachers who, in an attempt to save the skin of their colleagues, are denying dignity to Nitin even in death?" Dr Reddy asked.

IIT student's father demands probe

Staff Reporter

NEW DELHI: The father of an IIT-Chennai student A. Nitin Kumar Reddy, who allegedly committed suicide in his hostel room in Chennai last week, has demanded an inquiry into the incident and said he would soon approach the National Human Rights Commission to take cognizance of the matter.

A final year M. Tech (Mechanical) student, Nitin committed suicide on May 4 by hanging himself from a ceiling fan. His father, an employee of DRDO here, A. Lakshmana Murthy alleged that Nitin took the step after his professor extended his project by six months, which meant he would not have been able to pass out with his batch-mates in May.

"I want a probe into the incident. If my son was at fault, I am ready to take the blame, but if it was the Institute's fault, I want the professor to be suspended," said Mr. Murthy.

Nitin had been offered a job with a banking and insurance software company and was to join in July. The six-month extension of his project also meant giving up on the job. "Nitin had spoken to me on May 4, and told me about the extension. He sounded very disappointed and I told him I would come down to Chennai," said Mr. Murthy.

A few minutes before taking the extreme step, Nitin sent an e-mail to his father and a few friends, detailing what was to be done with his belongings after he was gone.

Mr. Murthy also said that the Institute's claim that Nitin was suffering from depression was not true: "They are trying to discredit my son by saying he was depressed. If that was the case, why were we not informed," he asked.

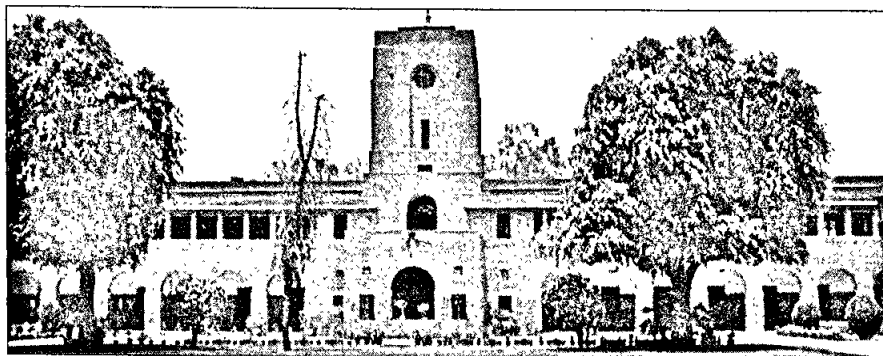# Select colleges may grant degrees

Centre plans law to grant them greater autonomy

ANUBHUTI VISHNOI

NEW DELHI, MAY 8

THE government is gearing up to pilot a legislation for ensuring greater levels of autonomy to colleges and institutes that have achieved a certain level of excellence.

Keen to have legal backing to the proposal, the Human Resources Development (HRD) Ministry is learnt to have initiated the process of drafting a law that will allow reputed colleges such as St Xavier's, Mumbai, and St Stephen's, Delhi, among others to award degrees to their students — a sole prerogative of universities.

Though the ministry had been considering this proposal for a while, it has now decided that the plan must be backed by a law to ensure greater autonomy to institutes of excellence.

But the degree-granting powers will come with riders. Such institutes will have to follow certain academic standards and best practices,

St Stephen's, Delhi, is among the colleges that figure in the proposal.   . EXPRESS ARCHIVE

encourage research, promote transparency in administrative and governance norms, etc.

Currently, colleges are affiliated to universities, which award graduate as well as post-graduate degrees.

Several colleges had raised the issue before and argued they should be accorded powers to award degrees.

A recent report submitted by a committee constituted to evolve a comprehensive policy for the autonomy of central educational institutions supports the move.

This committee, headed by legal educationist Prof N R Madhava Menon, calls for greater autonomy

to colleges and their gradual upgrade to university status.

"The system of affiliation has let down academic standards both in the affiliated colleges and in affiliating universities. It is not conducive to continue the system in the present circumstances," reads the committee report. "Given the need for increasing the number of universities, it is appropriate that established colleges with a good track record are elevated to status of universities in a phased manner giving them time to organise themselves for new challenges."

The other suggestions include allowing IIMs to offer degrees, semester systems and choice-based credit courses as well as dual degree programmes across unversities, freedom to central educational institutes to start any programme of study, establish centres and departments and create teaching positions, hire eminent faculty from across the world, etc.

Economic Times ND 09-May-11 p-3

Brace Up for Higher Fees at Central Universities

HRD Ministry-appointed panel suggests freedom to institutions to set their fees

URMI A GOSWAMI
NEW DELHI

The era of exceptionally low fees at central universities could soon be over, if the government accepts the alternative funding system suggested by the Human Resource Development Ministry-appointed Madhava Menon Committee. The freedom to institutions to set their fees is one of the key recommendations of the committee. It has also suggested revamping of the public funding system to increase autonomy of the institutions as well as ensure a productive and efficient allocation of funds to institutions.

Given trends in growth of the higher education system and government allocation, it is clear that complete dependence on public funds is not a viable option.

As the demand for raising the level of education at central universities to match global standards increases, public funding will not be sufficient to meet the increased demand for funds.

The committee has suggested that the institutes should have the freedom to raise alternative funding. This can be internal and external. Giving central educational institutions the freedom to decide the fees to be charged would be one way of increasing revenues. The university should also have a free hand in the quantum of scholarships to be granted. All of this will have to be in keeping with the broad policy guidelines of the government. It has said that funds raised by the central university or educational institute should not be adjusted against any grant from government agencies. At present, any funds raised beyond government grants are adjusted against it. The committee makes it clear that external generation of funding has to be in conformity with general financial rules and policy. On internal generation or funding from government, the committee has suggested that all central institutions be given a block grants, with the flexibility to manage finances. The annual revisions of the block grant will depend on the institutions overall academic and financial performance. It has suggested that government departments and ministries, particularly relating to science and technology, should provide a minimum 30% overhead on research and development funding.

The panel has suggested revamping of the public funding system to increase autonomy of the institutions

To ensure more effective allocation, the committee has suggested financial incentives for overall performance. A stipulated amount of regular grant should be given to all institutions that are performing well. The grant should be enhanced to ensure parity with development requirements of the institutes. A performance indicator will have to be developed which will reward those institutions that exceed the set requirements. This could be research, publications and so on. As part of this, it has suggested the idea of norm based funding. The committee is of the view that a special provision of grants should be made for institutions which show clear improvements in the gross enrolment ratio.

We aim to step into the education void: Pearson India President

INTERVIEW

Preeti Mehra
New Delhi, May 8

Pearson Plc, one of the largest education services company globally and owners of Financial Times and the Penguin brand, views India as a laboratory in the education field. Post its acquisition of majority stake in Bangalore-based TutorVista, Pearson is planning an even bigger portfolio for itself.

The President of Pearson India, Mr Khozem Merchant, speaks to *Business Line* on the opportunities it sees ahead.

The Government has pumped around Rs 50,000 crore into education in this year's Budget. You have said that this is a clear indication of a 'need gap' in the sector that can be filled by education institutions. What will Pearson's role be in bridging this gap?

I think first you have to step back a little bit and ask yourself why the Government is making such a colossal and welcome allocation. The reason for that is presumably that they believe, as everyone else believes, whether they are educationists, parents, administrators, that there is a big disparity between quality of learning and the demand for learning. That is a self-evident truth, but it is not one that has been necessarily publicly embraced for many years. But, it has been embraced now with great boldness and candidness by the Education Minister and his government, I guess for a couple of reasons. Over the past 15 years, accelerated economic growth has highlighted sharp disparities.

Unless these disparities are bridged, that level of growth will obviously not be sustainable... If India is to develop as a knowledge economy, services economy, then, it needs to have educated people as well as people with employable skills. Much of this is anecdotal evidence, but in the early period of economic growth, those gaps became evident as companies grew, recruited more people and discovered to their horror that people didn't have the skills despite the degree. ... This is a general observation but one that crept upon India and the consequences of ignoring that is that the country would lose competitiveness vis-à-vis its principal trading partners and say China.

If it is ignored, it could lead to a big social problem considering the demographics of the country.....if young people don't get jobs, it's a problem... So, that is coming to very sharp focus in the last 4 to 5 years... India needs to train its people in a way that it sets them apart from other sources of skilled labour...this is the broad macro perspective.

So, how does Pearson plan to leverage this gap?

Pearson has a big role-...What we can do is manifold and India's needs are manifold and we think that as the world's largest education services company – by services, I mean the things that support the delivery of learning, is not just the content, its training to provide learning, managing the schools, managing the technology to provide learning tools, to provide remedial education – ...we do feel that we can step in confidently into that gap in India. And the gap is a fantastic opportunity

Mr Khozem Merchant, President of Pearson India.

for India and I'm confident India will do it and it has done in the recent past, there is a precedent of similar gaps that have existed and India has done absolutely the right thing. For example, telecom and banking services where they made a great leap in telescoped time. It did in 3 or 4 years what mature economies take a lot longer to do... Indian reform can make these great exponential leaps for the whole generation in what is obsolete technology, obsolete learning, redundant techniques and redundant methodologies. So, the same can happen in education and it can happen through multiple suppliers. There are many very fine Indian companies and global companies developing the technologies but the point is steeping into that void.... we are excited because India presents to us a landscape of skills and capabilities, fantastic opportunities for providing services from K-12 to school management services to vocational training, and to professional education.... And there isn't in my knowledge a comparable organisation that has done breath or depth...we would step into that void with some responsibility and humility...

So, while we are talking about the government, there are some public-private participation (PPP) models that you've been looking at. There are reports that TutorVista is talking to states like Rajasthan and Maharashtra to get involved in PPP education ventures.

With the acquisition of TutorVista, we've acquired obviously a company with four sets of activities – one of them is K-12 into which this PPP activity could potentially fit. If they see PPP opportunities as a way to expand their footprint in K-12, I'm sure they'll follow their nose on that. At another level of our strategic expansion here, we're looking at the private sector and I think in large measure that will remain our focus...

You have raised your stake in TutorVista to 76 per cent, through which you now manage 19 schools which are currently under the Manipal brand. There has been talk that you are looking at taking over more schools. Would those form a separate chain under the Pearson brand?

No. TutorVista is now a company that we control.

We're very lucky to have a fantastic management and the founders with us, that's an important part of our thinking. As we move forward and as we think about opening up or purchasing managing control of schools, then certainly there will be a branding exercise few years down the line... the point is that in time it would be a brand and marketing of our choice rather than the one that we have inherited...in time the rebranding will take place.

You have a joint venture with Educom – India Can – for vocational training.... Where do you see this going?

We have a dynamic partner in Educom for vocational training, mostly for blue collar workers. Here, there is a fantastic opportunity. We are looking to spread to 120 centres, from the 80 right now. Here, we will spread education in a physical face-to-face format as well as online.

You and the Chairman have repeatedly spoken about India serving as a laboratory for the company. What has been your learning till now?

First, we have learnt a lot about price. This is a price-sensitive market and we realise that to build presence in the mass market, one of the things that we will need is our ability to maintain the quality of Pearson products, but those will at the same time have to be affordable. We now have a practitioner sense of the price sensitivity of the market here.

We have also learnt a lot about the art of distribution for this is not a homogenous market and it changes pretty rapidly any which way you turn. We have also grasped how this country offers tremendous opportunity for the application of technology for learning. And that is really exciting when the audience is large and dispersed.

We can also offer a lot of our products only online and need not have them in the physical form... they could be in digital form... it is more the distribution of learning and not the distribution of books as we consume learning now it in many different ways. Our children today consume it in many different ways and the skill there is to master the different distribution channels. A markets like this and others with the same socio-economic profile forces you to grasp that.

LAW TEST

The Law School Admission Test-India (LSAT-India) for admission into Indian law schools was conducted successfully by Pearson VUE recently. LSAT-India is a special version of the LSAT (Law School Admission Test) conducted globally by the Law School Admission Council (LSAC) for use by law schools in India. Thirty law colleges have adopted LSAT-India 2011 as their criterion for admissions, a more than seven-fold jump over last year when only four colleges accepted LSAT-India scores. Institutions such as IIT Kharagpur-Law School, Jindal Global Law School, UPES, Dehradun, Bangalore, Mysore, etc have signed up for acceptance of LSAT-India 2011 scores for admissions to their 2011 batches. Designed to measure critical thinking skills, such as logical reasoning, analytical reasoning and reading comprehension, LSAT-India was conducted successfully across 17 cities.

Pioneer ND 9/05/2011 P-3

DU's web portal with comprehensive databank of students, teachers in offing

ROHINEE SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi University is on its way to getting hi-tech. After seizing up on the issue of the semester system, the university now plans to create a portal, *Student Life Cycle Automation.* This online system will be roping in all the colleges of the university. The university is in the process of creating a Management Information System (MIS). The system will be a comprehensive databank of all students and teachers associated with the university.

From the time a student gets enrolled in any college of the Delhi University, till the time he passes out and becomes an alumni, all the details will be available on this portal. For the alumni of the university who have limited access and limited contribution in the university will also a get an opportunity to stay connected.

The new web portal will provide a centralised system that will enable students to fill admission forms, get admit cards, examination datesheets and report cards all through the same internet window. The website will also be a social networking tool among those

From the time a student gets enrolled in any college of the DU, till the time he passes out and becomes an alumni, all the details will be available on this portal

associated with the university.

"There will be chat rooms where the teachers and students will be able to interact with each other," informed a Delhi University professor who is in the team working on the project. The website will also enable teachers to put new course content and also share lectures with the students.

Every student and teacher who is part of Delhi University will have a login ID and a password to access the website. All colleges and departments of Delhi University will have a link in this portal. "In the first phase, the colleges will be provided forms to collect the student's data. The colleges will also be given the flexibility of providing additional information, like male, female,

Schedule Caste and Schedule Caste seats and whatever the colleges deem fit," informed a professor.

After the system is set in place, the university management is also likely to open the window for its alumni. "Various prominent personalities in this country have passed out of Delhi University. Not many have an access to the university. Through this portal, we will also be opening the gateway for the university passed out to stare their wisdom with out students," added another professor.

Two sub-committees have been formed by the university management that has been working on the project. This committee is meeting on Monday and is expected to come out with the final blueprint and a system to implement it.

A pilot project on the MIS system is already being run by the School of Open Learning. HCL technology had created the software and had been running this. The university is yet to get the software designed. The Institute of Informatics and Communication, Delhi University is likely to operate the MIS system. So far, only Jamia Millia Islamia is the only university to have such online system in place.

Education: for a job or a degree?

The false choice between higher education and jobs begs for university expansion and community college creation

Manish Sabharwal
is chairman,
TeamLease Services.

PUNEET CHANDHOK/HINDUSTAN TIMES

As a staffing firm, TeamLease sadly doesn't hire 95% of the youngsters who come to it for a job. As a training firm, it estimates that 40% of these job-interview rejects need more than a year of "repair" or "preparation" to make them truly job-ready. But when we try and enrol our job-interview rejects for longer courses, many candidates or their parents tell us that they have already been enrolled in three-year college degree courses. They tell us that a degree is prerequisite "social signalling" for getting married—among other things—but they come to us for stuff that a degree does not get them—a job or job training.

While short-term vocational courses can work for many kids, we unfortunately find that most candidates need more than short-term repair. But where does this partition in the cerebral cortex of students and parents, between the institutions that give them a degree, a job and job-relevant education, come from?

I'd like to make the case that this unintended outcome of higher education public policy arises from trying to control quality by controlling quantity. The licence *raj* in colleges and universities blunts competition, quality and innovation. So most accredited institutions of higher education only teach 180 days a year, do a poor job of teaching soft and English skills, and have poor employer linkages that could create curriculum relevance and internships. Naturally, courses at these institutions don't lead to jobs.
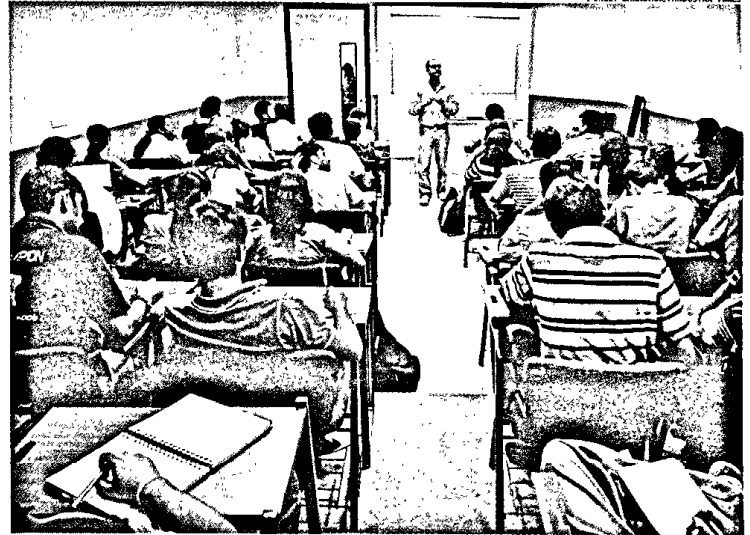
This higher education emergency creates two policy priorities—a massive expansion of the current system to create competition, and the formation of a new system of community colleges that can innovate at the intersection of education and employment (self-interest disclosure: TeamLease is currently working on community colleges in some states).

The first priority, of expanding existing universities and creating new ones, will only materialize after the current conceptual and spiritual hostility to non-government universities at the University Grants Commission is reviewed. As a country we should not care if a university is private or public, but whether it is good or bad. China has more than doubled the number of its universities—from 1,022 to 2,263—in the last decade, and the number of students enrolled in degree courses there has risen from one million in 1997 to five million now. Some of this quantity is of low quality, but as engineering colleges in South India have shown, quantity and competition are the only ways to raise quality standards and breed innovation.

The second priority is creating a mezzanine layer of community colleges between higher education and schools. Polytechnics have been unable to fulfil this role because of birth defects in funding, staffing, infrastructure and labour market linkages.

Community colleges are not a legal definition, but a state of mind. These colleges will offer two-year associate degrees that are not normal degrees on a diet, but vocational training on steroids. They will offer blended learning with an embedded semester of internship (learning-by-doing and learning-while-earning) and employers will be at the heart of admission, curriculum and certification. They will work 224 days a year (instead of the current 180) and 6 hours a day (instead of the current 5). These extra 444 contact hours every year will be used for employability. These community colleges will take education to people rather than people to education, i.e. instead of one campus of 500 acres, we should have 1,000 campuses of half an acre each. They will offer distributed education at reasonable cost (₹50-150 per hour). A new community college system—lower costs, distributed delivery and employer linkages—will improve student access and greatly increase our education inclusiveness.

Current university regulators and academics probably base their objections to non-government university expansion and community colleges on their agreement with Spanish philosopher Jose Ortega y Gasset (1883-1955), who wrote that "A university should be about education—teaching students, making them cultured individuals, and equal to 'the height of their time'. They will have an understanding, not technical or economic but spiritual, of the particular qualities and challenges of the age and what it calls for from its most enlightened souls."

Who I am—somebody who chose his parents wisely and went to elite educational institutions—couldn't agree more with Gasset. But what I do—work for a people supply chain company which has hired only 5% of the kids that come to it—violently disagrees. Culture, enlightenment and spirituality are empty words without a job. Woody Allen once said that the advantage of being bisexual is that you double your chance of finding a date. India can and must create institutions of higher education that lead to both a degree and a job.

Comments are welcome at
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Can business be taught?

Business education should exist, but more attention must be paid to the value the education delivers

THERE was a time when higher education was only available to an elite few. These students studied the ideas of great thinkers, literature and history. They entered the labour force with few practical skills, but had strong analytical and communication skills that were highly valued. Now, after a long trend of globalisation, the premium on education has induced ever more people to go to university. According to the Census taken in 1940, 10% of adult Americans had at least some post-secondary education. By 1975 this figure was about 25% and by 2010 it had risen to 55%. Does it still make sense for many of these students, who aren't fit for or interested in engineering or hard sciences, to receive a university education? And if they're going to get one, should they be spending valuable time learning about business?

According to professors quoted in a recent *NYT* article, the answer is yes. They note that more students than ever are choosing to study "business". Their motivation is not a quest for divine truth. Rather, the article alleges, they take on the massive expense of higher education with the sole, depraved goal of landing a high-paying job:

Scholars in the field point to three sources of trouble. First, as long ago as 1959, a Ford Foundation report warned that too many undergraduate business students chose their majors "by default." Business programs also attract more than their share of students who approach college in purely instrumental terms, as a plausible path to a job, not out of curiosity about, say, Ronald Coase's theory of the firm...

The article brings up two different issues with business education. One, interesting, question concerns just what is the best way to educate business students. Separate from that is the question of whether business education belongs in university altogether. It seems likely that as more students go to university more will demand (and be better matched with) subjects with direct application to their career goals. It's a bit elitist to suggest that only classical subjects merit study. Furthermore, it seems inefficient to have a large share of the population spending four years reading Chaucer. Making higher education more widely available may mean redefining what we consider an appropriate curriculum. The presence of more applied subjects makes sense for many students.

But the concern that business education is not rigorous enough is a valid one. One worry is that aspects of the course of study (the article calls out marketing) are not very challenging and an over-reliance on group-work means that students are not learning useful skills. An extreme view is that business education has little intrinsic value at all: it's merely a high-priced signaling and networking opportunity. If that is the case, then the time and money spent on business education is poorly allocated. Moreover, we'd expect that after a while, having a business degree would make it harder to get a job. If indeed the students do not learn useful skills, employers will catch on and avoid hiring business programme graduates.

Interestingly, according to Richard Vedder, this is already happening.

But labor markets are catching on: more college graduates are not getting the technical, managerial or professional jobs traditionally expected, ending up instead as truck drivers, tree removal specialists, taxi drivers, beauticians, etc. Ironically, the schools ranked best by US News & World Report or by Forbes mostly do not even offer many business majors, while schools ranked far lower almost universally have such programs.

Business education should exist in universities, but more attention must be paid to the value the education delivers. "Dilbert" creator Scott Adam's recent *WSJ* op-ed suggests that mediocre students of all subjects are better off with some applied experience than they are with time spent in the classroom. It's a contentious argument, but it brings up an interesting point; maybe business students would be better served by having more applied experience as part of their requirements. There's also no reason why business curricula cannot be more academically rigorous. I once had several MBAs walk out of the classroom when I tried to show them how to solve a problem using logarithms. We should probably expect more from business students.

The mere concept of business education is not a bad one. As we move to a more service-oriented economy it may actually make quite a lot of sense. But unlike philosophy, business is a fairly new subject to academia. The teaching of business skills in the classroom is still a work in progress.

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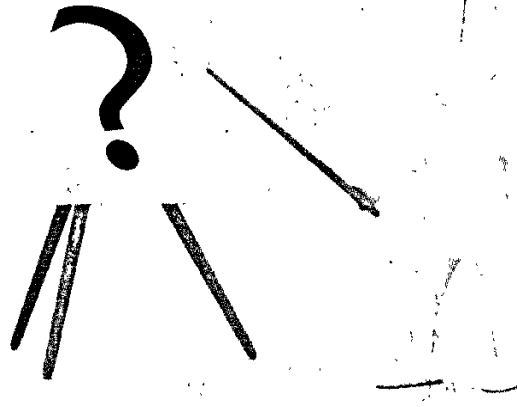
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'Schizophrenic' computer to help understand our brain

Virtual Neural Network Created To Decode Mental Illness

Washington: In a unique experiment, scientists in the US claim to have afflicted computers with virtual schizophrenia to better understand the human brain with the condition. A team from University of Texas and Yale University has used a virtual computer model or "neural network" to simulate the excessive release of dopamine in the brain.

The findings, published in the 'Biological Psychiatry' journal, revealed that the network recalled memories in a distinctly schizophrenic-like fashion. "The hypothesis is that dopamine encodes the importance the salience of experience. When there's too much dopamine, it leads to exaggerated salience, and the brain ends up learning from things that it shouldn't be learning from," said team member Uli Grasemann.

The results bolster a hypothesis known in schizophrenia circles as the hyperlearning hypothesis, which posits that people suffering from schizophrenia have brains that lose the ability to forget or ignore as much

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Without forgetting, they lose the ability to extract what's meaningful out of the immensity of stimuli the brain encounters. They start making connections that aren't real, or drowning in a sea of so many connections they lose the ability to stitch together any kind of coherent story.

The neural network used by Grasemann and his adviser, Professor Risto Miikkulainen, is called DISCERN. Designed by Miikkulainen, DISCERN is able to learn natural language. In this research, it was used to simulate what happens to language

as result of eight different types of neurological dysfunction. The results of the simulations were compared by Ralph Hoffman, professor of psychiatry at the Yale School of Medicine, to what he saw when studying human schizophrenics.

"With neural networks, you basically train them by showing them examples, over and over and over again. Every time you show it an example, you say, if this is the input, then this should be your output, and if this is the input, then that should be your output. "You do it again and again thousands of times, and every time it adjusts a little bit more towards doing what you want. In the end, if you do it enough, the network has learned," Grasemann said.

In order to model hyperlearning, Grasemann and Miikkulainen ran the system through its paces again, but with one key parameter altered. They simulated an excessive release of dopamine by increasing the system's learning rate-essentially telling it to stop forgetting so much. PTI

KNOWLEDGE HUBS

Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) has initiated the setting up of national knowledge functional hubs (NKFH) focusing on specific verticals in industry that are facing severe human resource and skill shortage. NKFHs will be designed to facilitate the creation of a mechanism to enable higher educational institutions and universities to engage with industry effectively and efficiently so that the quality of new engineering graduates in the country improves dramatically. The aim of NKFH is to facilitate industry-academia connect in tier II and tier III institutions, which are the source of bulk engineering graduates for the capital goods industry.