Newspaper Clips
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Getting the IITs back on top

Philip G. Altbach

Losing vision and mission: The numerous factors that made the IITs excellent are being whittled away. The picture is of IIT Delhi. *Photo: The Hindu*
Photo: Sandeep Saxena

India's premier institutes of technology are losing their academic edge because of unplanned expansion and excessive politics

The Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT) figure prominently among Indian higher education institutions known outside the country. They are internationally respected for the quality of their graduates and for the quality of their teaching. The IITs may be the most selective schools in the world, with more than 500,000 students taking the entrance exams each year. Yet, the IITs have been in trouble for some time, and recent comments by Ved Prakash, the chairman of the University Grants Commission certainly do not help their cause. Mr. Prakash called the IITs "glorified engineering colleges" and argued that traditional universities should be the main beneficiaries of funding.

Standing apart

Why have the IITs been so successful over a half century? They are elite institutions — attracting top faculty members committed to the best-quality teaching and with some focus on research. The faculty knew that their students would be the cream of the crop and that meritocracy would be the hallmark of the "IIT ethos." They were attracted not by high salaries but by an idea that top, international quality higher education in technology and engineering can succeed in India. The country needs some elite institutions if India is to compete globally. IIT governance has traditionally been less bureaucratic than in other Indian universities — academic staff have had more power to influence key decisions and politics has been generally absent from campus life. In other words, the IITs have been more like the best universities worldwide, and are unlike the mainstream Indian academic institutions. Without question, good governance is central to the success of academic institutions everywhere — and Indian universities, steeped in bureaucracy, have not been noted for effective campus governance

One of the main reasons that the IITs and, later, the Indian Institutes of Management were established was precisely because the traditional universities could not be reformed. Bureaucracy, politics, a dispersion of academic authority, and other factors prevented this. Unfortunately, the situation has not changed over the past half century. While some of the traditional universities have good quality departments and some of the colleges are outstanding, the institutions themselves seem impervious to change.

Why are the IITs in trouble? They have been unable to replace the superior quality faculty who were first attracted, as several generations have retired. Inadequate funding, much greater opportunities in the private sector, and some deterioration at the IITs themselves have made them less attractive. At present, a significant percentage of academic posts remain vacant because appropriate candidates could not be found.

In an effort to "spread the wealth," there are now 17 IITs, many established in recent years, and some located in quite remote places. This expansion has to some extent "cheapened the brand" since the overall quality could not be maintained — in part because qualified academic staff cannot be lured to mofussil locations. Top facilities — including needed laboratories, residences, and others — could not be provided in a timely way. Overexpansion has not served either the IITs or the quality of Indian higher education well. India, facing public demand for IIT-level education, as well as shortages of top talent in most fields, frequently errs on the side of expanding too quickly, failing to ensure that the needed intellectual and infrastructural resources are available.

Course correction

The IITs have also become enmeshed in the complex political issues affecting Indian higher education. Close to half the students admitted to the IITs must be from the backward classes or disadvantaged caste and tribal groups. Policies relating to these reservations have been constantly debated and litigated.

Appointments of academic staff are also affected by reservation policies — but not to as great an extent. Other political battles concerning the locations of new IITs and other issues have also ensued. There have also been disputes relating to the appointments of IIT directors and allegations of political inference.

The factors that made the IITs excellent are being whittled away. What is needed is a return to the effective policies and practices that characterised the IITs first for several decades. Rather than forced to conform to the norms of the rest of India's sclerotic higher education system, the IITs should be a beacon for the rest. The UGC's Ved Prakash has said exactly the wrong thing.

(Philip G. Altbach is research professor and director of the Center for International Higher Education at Boston College, U.S.)

e-paper

IIT taps technology to save heritage

Madras Centre To Focus On Seismic Safety; Kangra Fort First On The List

M Ramya | TNN

Chennai: Each year India loses a historical monument or parts of it to natural hazards or time. Archaeologists and heritage lovers have expressed dismay over the lack of a system to monitor the safety and restoration of heritage structures.

IIT-Madras has now formed a consortium of archaeologists, architects, historians and engineers within and outside the country to plug this lacuna. Convenor of the centre Arun Menon said, "Of the 29 world heritage monuments in India, around 70% lie in seismic zones. There is an urgent need to study and boost the safety of heritage structures in the country using fundamental research and technology."

The National Centre for Safety of Heritage Structures was set up in September with a five-year grant of Rs 12 crore from the human resource development ministry. After five years, funds will be provided through a non-Plan grant.

A laboratory has been set up at IIT-Madras to study construction materials from historical sites and check for reactions under simulated conditions..

Heritage expert S Suresh of INTACH said many heritage structures are 'living' monuments that are in use by government departments. So, there is regular maintenance, but not the kind one would expect to be carried out in heritage structures, which is why such documentation is important.

The primary focus of the centre would be seismic safety, an issue in India. The 2001 Bhuj earthquake wiped out a large number of heritage structures in Kutch, while 20% of heritage Buddhist monasteries were lost in the 2011 earthquake in Sikkim, a place that sees a moderate earthquake every 20 years. The centre will first study Kangra Fort in Himachal Pradesh, which is in seismic zone five (risk of high-intensity earthquakes), and Buddhist monasteries in Sikkim.

At the end of five years, the centre will start masters and doctoral programmes on structural safety of heritage structures for officials from Archaeological Survey of India and state archaeology departments to build engineering manpower to understand and protect heritage structures from natural hazards, aging and weathering.

ON THE MONUMENT TRAIL

▶ IIT-Madras has formed a **body to study material from historical sites,** and check reactions under certain conditions

▶ It will look at **seismic safety of historical structures**

▶ The centre has a **five-year grant of ₹12 cr** from the HRD ministry

▶ Its first projects are **Kangra Fort in Himachal Pradesh, and Buddhist monasteries** in Sikkim

IIT-B and Washington University Join Hands; Offers Joint MBA Course in India

The Corporate Leaders Conclave also witnessed the inauguration of IIT-B-WUSTL-Corporate Network. This is a network that is intended to bring about greater engagement between the leaders and faculty members of both the institutions, plus clear the hurdles and bringing together the corporate giants from the two nations.

Prof Devang Khakhar, Director, IIT-B, was quoted stating, "IIT-B and WUSTL have active research collaborations in areas related to energy and environment. The joint research seeks to address global problems by bringing together outstanding faculty members and students of these two institutions, along with the industry", reports the DNA.

IIT-B also intends to set up a research park at its campus, which in all probability will be backed by the government of India.
(http://jobs.siliconindia.com/career-news/IITB-and-Washington-University-Join-Hands-Offers-Joint-MBA-Course-in-India-nid-155779.html)

IIM-Calcutta may hike fee to Rs 15 lakh

Jhimli Mukherjee Pandey, TNN | Oct 22, 2013, 03.03 AM IST

KOLKATA: IIM-Calcutta is finally feeling the pinch of keeping tuition fee lowest among major IIMs. If the B-school authorities get approval from the board of governors, the fee is likely to be hiked from the next academic session. So students aspiring to get into the coveted institute may have to shell out more next year onwards.

IIM-C, however, will still remain cheap if compared with its peers. While IIM-Ahmedabad charges Rs 18 lakh for a two-year MBA programme and IIM-Bangalore a lakh less, the same course will cost Rs 14.5-15 lakh at IIM-C even after the fee hike. It charges Rs 13.5 lakh for the course now, which was increased from Rs 9 lakh four years back.

IIM-C, which has always tried to maintain a student-friendly image when it comes to tuition fees, has finally started debating the issue of an impending hike since it's becoming exceedingly difficult to generate funds. Though the ministry of human resources development is the guardian body of the B-school, the latter does not get any financial assistance from it and organizes for funds from corporate projects that faculty members bring to the institute. To augment earnings, the faculty has also started teaching on the satellite mode.

The fee-hike proposal is likely to be discussed at the next scheduled board meeting in December. It will be first moved by the admissions chair and then it will come up for debate at the faculty council before being sent to the board for its approval. Institute insiders say that if the proposal doesn't get placed in the December board meeting, it will surely be placed in the first meeting of the board in January 2014.

"The tuition fee hike is impending since there has not been a hike for four years now. The rhetoric at IIM-C is in favour of the hike since it's really becoming difficult to run the institute without a increase in tuition fee," said Anindya Sen, dean - academics of IIM-C. Though nothing has been finalized yet, he suggested that the revised tuition fee should be between Rs 14.5 lakh and Rs 15 lakh.

Four years ago, IIM-C had announced a steep jump - from Rs 9 lakh to Rs 13.5 lakh - in tuition fee. Some faculty members felt it's better to adopt a gradual-hike policy than opting for a 30-40% increase at one go. "This comes as a shock to students and I am against it. An increase in tuition fee is most likely but I am in favour of a gradual hike given the all-round price scenario," said Ashoke Banerjee, dean - programmes initiatives.

The admissions chairperson of the institute, Sanjit Singh, corroborated this. "You cannot have such disparity between the big IIMs when it comes to tuition fees. This clearly shows the kind of stress IIM-C is already suffering. The hike will have to happen before the new batch joins in June 2014," he said.

HT Chandigarh

With country's top varsity tag, PU seeks ₹150-cr grant from Centre

FISCAL DEFICIT Against the expenditure of ₹400 crore, university generates ₹120 crore from its resources; vice-chancellor is confident the demand will be met

HT Correspondent
■ chandigarh@hindustantimes.com

CHANDIGARH: Panjab University (PU) vice-chancellor on Monday said the university had sought ₹150 crore in funds from the Centre. Talking to reporters on the sidelines of the launch of PU's Facebook page, the V-C said he was confident that the university's demand would be met.

The ₹150 crore funds demanded by the university are to meet the budget deficits of current financial year. The V-C however, did not reveal as to what were the budget estimates for the year 2014-15 submitted by the university in the meeting with Human Resource Developmen (HRD) last week.

"We have got the financial help so far on our rich heritage and performance on various fronts. With the university rated as the topmost in the country by an international agency it would further strengthen our case," the VC said while admitting that there was an unease and nervousness about the university at the centre due to its huge financial liabilities.

The VC said as per ministry of human resource development, the ratio of teaching and non-teaching employees in the university should be 1: 1.2 but in the case of Panjab University it was 1: 4, which was very high. "With no regular budgets, it is

> WITH NO REGULAR BUDGET, IT IS DIFFICULT FOR THE UNIVERSITY TO PAY SALARIES. SO, WE ARE TRYING TO SETTLE FINANCIAL ISSUES WITH THE HELP OF CENTRE AS WELL AS PUNJAB GOVT.
> **ARUN GROVER, PU vice-chancellor**

very difficult for the university to pay even salaries. So, the university is trying to settle the financial issues vigorously with the help of Centre as well as Punjab government," the V-C added. He also said the university was pressing for inclusion of four PU centres, which are in Punjab to be part of state's regular budget. The V-C said, there was approximately an annual expenditure of ₹400 crore and the university generates around ₹120 crore annually from its own resources. The university also gets an annual grant of ₹20 crore from Punjab.

The amount got as grants from Centre was ₹107 crore in 2012. "Once the university starts figuring in the list of central budget universities, I am hopeful that things would improve," the V-C said.

PU launches Facebook page

■ Panjab University V-C Arun Kumar Grover launching PU's official Facebook page at a press conference in Chandigarh on Monday. GURPREET SINGH/HT

CHANDIGARH: Panjab University (PU) is now available on social networking site Facebook.

PU vice-chancellor, professor, Arun Kumar Grover on Monday launched PU's official Facebook page www.facebook.com. Professor, Grover said, "PU is among the leading universities. This page would help in connecting with the younger generation, who are

our clients," he said adding that it would also help in getting feedbacks and suggestions to the university.

VC said almost anything concerning the students would be put up on the Facebook page. It may include success or positive stories, important information regarding ongoing and upcoming events, announcements for the stu-

dents about the people visiting the university, the topic of lectures, its schedule, venue and time, with brief details about the visitor, place where the visitor would be available if somebody wanted to speak to him or her. The VC further said he wanted the facebook page to be handled by the student council of Panjab University.

DU readies to hand out digital degrees

Manash Pratim Gohain | TNN

New Delhi: Ghost image, security thread, barcode, watermark, rainbow colour and photocopier protector—we are not talking of any hi-tech gizmo, credit card or high-security numberplate, but Delhi University's new-age digital degree certificates.

These certificates will be handed out to students for the first time during the 2014 convocation. Carrying 12 security measures, these marksheets will also be smaller (of A4 size) and can be verified from the photocopies by a

> **These certificates, which carry a security thread, barcode and watermark, will be given to students for the first time during the 2014 convocation. The marksheets will also be smaller in size**

barcode reader. The university is planning to deliver online transcripts of the marksheets on the same day.

DU has embarked on the creation of a first-of-its-kind degree certificate which will ensure that the only tangible proof of one's hard-earned academic credentials is tamper-proof, and almost impossible to forge.

"The certificate will be prepared electronically and the data will alternatively be available on the portal. The degree generated will have a secure individual number which can be verified online. At present, it takes around two years to deliver the degree certificate. Even verification takes more than a month. We hope the digital degree will address these problems as well as solve security issues," Satish Kumar, OSD, exam branch, Delhi University, said.

Other advantages of digital degrees also include greater portability, owing to smaller size, easier verification due to presence of a barcode and a sleek look.

"Many students apply abroad and the number of such students is increasing. This electronically generated degree will be helpful during verification even from a distant place via the portal, thus saving everyone a lot of hardship," Rup Lal, dean of examinations, DU, said.

HT Kolkata

SPREADING CHEER AND LOVE

Attend this IIT-Kgp robotics workshop

Kshitij, the largest techno-management fest in Asia, organised by IIT-Kgp, is set to organise its much-awaited annual robotics workshop at GD Birla Sabhagar on October 27. The workshop follows close on the heels of the launch of their Kshitij 2014 website (www.ktj.in). Kshitij is also leading a nationwide campaign on naming the next version of Android after lassi, a popular Indian drink. An open letter by them addressing Sundar Pichai, senior VP of Google and head of Android, suggesting the name of Lassi for the next version of Android, has received mass support. The workshop focuses on instilling the latest concepts in the field of robotics in young minds and providing them with a hands-on experience.

IIT Ropar collaborates with PGI for research

ARUN SHARMA
TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

ROPAR, OCTOBER 18
IIT Ropar within five years of being set up has made its mark in agricultural research in the country and introduced greener technology as an alternative to stubble burning.

It has also collaborated with Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER), Chandigarh, to undertake research in fields such as cancer, cardiology, paediatrics, drug delivery, endocrinology, otolaryngology, and dermatology.

The premier institute is planning to develop bio devices for use in cardiology and control system for drug delivery that will help operations in anaesthesia and intensive care units. Similarly, it will also develop indigenous and low cost otoacoustic emissions (OAE) testing for early detection of deafness.

PROJECTS ON ANVIL

- Bio devices for drug delivery that will help operations in anaesthesia and intensive care units

- Indigenous and low cost otoacoustic emissions (OAE) testing for early detection of deafness

- Orthopaedic implants and device design

- To synthesise new organic receptors for anti-cancer activity

Research on orthopaedic implants and device design is also progressing smoothly and experiments in this regard are to begin at PGI soon.

IIT Ropar will also synthesise new organic receptors that PGI will evaluate for anti-cancer activity.

Earlier, IIT Ropar, in association with Aston University, Birmingham, UK, had unveiled technology to produce biofuel and biochar using agricultural residue, especially paddy straw. It will help protect the environment and increase monetary benefits for farmers.

Invites NRIs to sponsor projects

Now, the institute has invited NRIs to fund research projects, scholarships and its expansion plans.

NRIs and others interested in contributing to building the institute might endow faculty chairs and scholarships for students, said Dr Rajyashree Khushu-Lahiri Head, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences and Convener, Corpus Fund Raising Committee.

They can contribute by sponsoring some research activity, or a new centre-of-excellence entirely based upon their expertise or needs of the people of the state, or sponsor some infrastructure for the permanent campus of the institute, said Dr Rajyashree.

Raju plays truant, HRD work suffers

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: HRD minister **M M Pallam Raju's** resignation is still pending with PM Manmohan Singh, but he wants the world to believe he has stopped working. At least, he has stopped attending office and important public functions of the ministry.

Now work goes to his residence and so do ministry officials. His private secretary regularly attends office and carries Raju's work. Ministry officials deny work has suffered, but privately admit that it helps if the minister is around. "He is a hands-on minister who used to spend a lot of time in office. If the minister is not around a general lethargy sets in. As it is only few months are left for the election. This is the time when the government pushes its agenda the fastest," a ministry source said. The first public appearance Raju is expected to make would be on October 30 at the meeting of the national monitoring committee for minority education.

Within days of Raju's resignation there was a day-long meeting of the Central Advisory Board of Education, chaired by the HRD minister. First, the ministry wanted it postponed, but then it was decided minister of state Jitin Prasada would chair the proceedings.

One of the biggest casualties of Raju's absence has been the postponement of the meeting of the empowered committee on safety and quality of midday meal.

For the full report, log on to www.timesofindia.com

LU prof found guilty of plagiarism, demoted

LUCKNOW: Initiating disciplinary action against a teacher found guilty of plagiarism, the Lucknow University executive council has divested him from the post of professor.

Post demotion, Neeraj Kumar has been made a reader, the post he was holding before the promotion, in the MBA department.

The action came on Monday, 15 months after Kumar got the promotion on the basis of the plagiarised paper.

This is the first time in Lucknow University's 90-year-old history that a professor has been demoted. "He has not only brought disrepute to the profession but also to the prestigious institution. He should be handed a bigger punishment," said a member of the executive council.

Hindustan Times, in its edition dated September 22, 2013, had carried a front-page report with the headline 'Guv holds LU prof guilty of plagiarism'.

LU spokesperson NK Pandey said the executive council resolved to "withdraw the conditional promotion granted to Kumar" last year. The decision was taken after the executive council considered the reply of Kumar in its emergent meeting.

The matter dates back to April last year when Kumar was accused of copying a research paper 'Human dilemmas of leaderships' penned by Abraham Zaleznik, a Harvard business school professor, to stake his claim as professor.

Even though he was promoted, LU constituted a three-member inquiry committee which found the allegation to be "overwhelmingly true". The report said "the research paper was essentially copied from the book of Zaleznik". The matter was re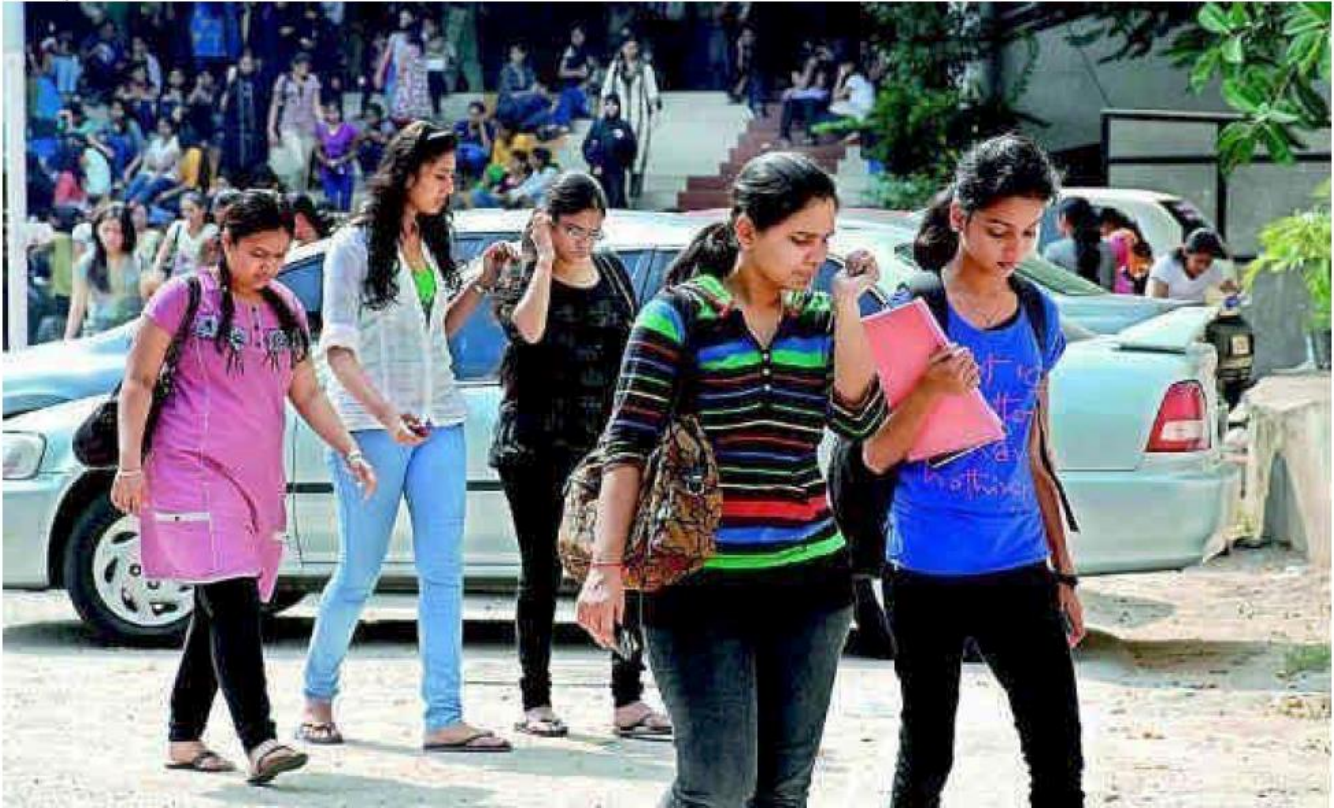ferred to Raj Bhawan, which also found Kumar guilty last month and directed the V-C to take appropriate action. Kumar went to court challenging the governor's decision. In the first week of October, the Lucknow bench of the Allahabad high court dismissed Kumar's petition and held him guilty.

When HT contacted Kumar, he said he was not aware of EC's decision and would not like to comment unless he gets any official communication to this effect from the university.

The varsity, meanwhile, remained tightlipped on the issue of initiating criminal proceedings against Kumar. **HTC**

Teachers criticise MHRD

DC | 21st Oct 2013

Picture for representational purpose only.

Coimbatore: The Association of University Teachers (AUT) has come down heavily upon the move by the Ministry of Human Resource and Development (MHRD) to confer the deemed university status on select autonomous colleges in Tamil Nadu.

The AUT also faulted the criteria set for the conversion as being elusive. The teachers have vowed to launch a protracted struggle to stop the "authoritarian on slaught." The AUT general council meeting held here on Sunday took strong exception to the MHRD move and alleged that the ministry had "hastily identified" 45 colleges for conferment of varsity status, 11 of them in TN.

"We perceive that this is a deliberate attempt at privatization and marketisation of higher education, which is detrimental to the higher educational prospects of weaker sections of society," said M Ravichandran, AUT general secretary, in a resolution adopted at the meeting.

The teachers' body also hoped that the state government would extend support to their cause, as it had earlier supported the struggle against the unitary university.

"The recent attempt by the MHRD is only the revised version of the same unitary university move, which was opposed by the teachers in the state vehemently," said Ravichandran.

The AUT said the Ministry had taken up unilateral decision to privatise the aided autonomous colleges into either deemed universities or state universities or degree conferring autonomous colleges, without consulting the state governments and organized academics. Such a conversion would result in closure of many programmes.