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काउंसिल पहुंचा IIT-UGC के बीच का झगड़ा

[त्रुतिका चोपड़ा | नई दिल्ली]

आईआईटी और यूनिवर्सिटी ग्रांट कमीशन (यूजीसी) के बीच का विवाद अब आईआईटी काउंसिल तक जा पहुंचा है। आईआईटी काउंसिल देश के 16 आईआईटी की सुप्रीम बॉडी है जो केंद्रीय मानव संसाधन मंत्रालय के तहत काम करती है। कोर्स को नियंत्रित करने की यूजीसी की कवायद से नाराज सभी आईआईटी ने यह प्रस्ताव रखा था कि इस मामले को काउंसिल में उठाया जाना चाहिए। यूजीसी के चेयरमैन भी इस काउंसिल के मेंबर हैं। ऐसा समझा जाता कि केंद्रीय शिक्षा मंत्री इस प्रस्ताव से सहमत हैं और इस मसले पर काउंसिल की बैठक 1 अक्टूबर को होने जा रही है।

आईआईटी खड़गपुर के डायरेक्टर पार्थ चक्रवर्ती ने इसकी पुष्टि करते हुए एसएमएस के जरिये ईटी को बताया, 'मुझे जहां तक जानकारी है कि

आईआईटी काउंसिल देश के 16 आईआईटी की सुप्रीम बॉडी है जो केंद्रीय मानव संसाधन मंत्रालय के तहत काम करती है

मंत्री ने इस मामले को आईआईटी काउंसिल की बैठक में उठाने का फैसला किया है जहां पर यूजीसी के साथ साथ सभी आईआईटी भी अपनी बात रखेंगे। मुझे लगता है कि यह सही फैसला है और मैं इसके लिए शिक्षा मंत्री को

धन्यवाद देना चाहूंगा जिन्होंने इस मामले में उचित रुख अपनाने का फैसला लिया।

हालांकि अभी तक मुझे औपचारिक तौर पर कोई जानकारी नहीं दी गई है लेकिन यह जल्दी ही साफ हो जाएगा।' चक्रवर्ती ने सबसे पहले यूजीसी के उस दिशानिर्देश का विरोध करते हुए मंत्रालय को पत्र लिखा था जिसमें स्थापित मानकों के मुताबिक कोर्स ऑफर करने की बात कही गई थी। सबसे पहले इस मामले को अगले दो हफ्तों के दौरान काउंसिल की स्टैंडिंग कमेटी में उठाया जाएगा। देश के मशहूर न्यूक्लियर साइंटिस्ट अनिल काकोडकर इस कमेटी के चेयरमैन हैं और वह पहले ही यूजीसी के इस फैसले के खिलाफ अपना विरोध जाहिर कर चुके हैं।

पूरे विवाद की शुरुआत यूजीसी के एक सर्कुलर से हुई जिसमें आईआईटी समेत सभी हायर एजुकेशन इंस्टीट्यूशन से यूजीसी के स्पेसिफिकेशंस के मुताबिक कोर्स को तय करने की बात कही गई थी। यूजीसी ने दिल्ली विश्वविद्यालय के फोर ईयर अंडरग्रेजुएट प्रोग्राम विवाद के बाद देश के सभी बड़े संस्थानों को यह सर्कुलर भेजा था। सबसे पहले बंगलुरु के आईआईएससी और अब आईआईटी ने इसका विरोध करना शुरू कर दिया है।

GAUTAM
BARUA

We don't need no regulation

For IITs, UGC should go back to its earlier practice of only listing names of degrees

THE UGC's role in higher education has been a talking point recently. It started with the rollback of Delhi University's four-year undergraduate programme, then came up again with regard to degrees being offered by IISc Bangalore and some other institutions. Now, the commission's letter to the IITs on the conformity of their degrees with those recognised by the UGC has generated more controversy.

The UGC Act applies to "universities", as defined in Section 2(f): "university' means a university established or incorporated by or under a Central act, a provincial act or a state act, and includes any such institution as may, in consultation with the university concerned, be recognised by the commission in accordance with the regulations made in this behalf under this act". In Section 3, deemed universities are defined and also included in the purview of the UGC. That the IITs are not universities and the provisions of the act do not apply to them is implied in Section 22(1): "The right of conferring or granting degrees shall be exercised only by a university established or incorporated by or under a Central act, a provincial act or a state act or an institution deemed to be a university under Section 3 or an institution specially empowered by an act of Parliament to confer or grant degrees."

The IITs fall under the last category, institutions specially empowered by an act of Parliament to confer or grant degrees. However, Section 22(3) states, "For the purposes of this section, 'degree' means any such degree as may, with the previous approval of the Central government, be specified in this behalf by the commission by notification in the official gazette." So if we take sections 22(1) and 22(3) together, it implies that the IITs are bound to award only those degrees specified by the commission. This is the only point on which the UGC has a say in IIT matters. So the UGC is right in asking the IITs to follow the provisions of Sec-

A reading of Section 22(3) and the initial notifications by the UGC strongly suggests that it has overstepped its authority.

tion 22 of the UGC Act.

What is to be specified by the UGC under Section 22(3), however, is not defined anywhere. In the beginning, the UGC specified merely the names of degrees — BA, BSc, BTech etc. This list would have new degrees added to it as the need arose; when design became established as a discipline, the BDes degree was added. So this list did not have an adverse impact on the IITs or similar institutions. One only had to make a request for a new degree, and in most reasonable cases, it was accepted (and in some unreasonable cases, too, if

one goes through the list of 163 odd degrees). Then, in a May 2009 notification, the UGC added the minimum duration of programmes of the new degrees introduced at the time. In the recent August 2014 notification, not only is the minimum duration of every degree specified, but also the entry qualifications. (Did the Central government approve this notification, as required by Section 22(3)? If so, the government should have seen the difficulties.) A set of "guidelines" has also been added. Does the act allow the UGC to impose such detailed restrictions on degrees? A reading of Section 22(3) and the initial notifications by the

UGC strongly suggests that the commission has overstepped its authority. This notification, if applicable to the IITs, will render a number of programmes that existed before it "illegal", such as the dual degree BTech-MTech programmes, and PhD programmes with a BTech as the entry qualification. What is to prevent more restrictions from being imposed through such notifications in future, if the provisions of the act are taken to mean "anything" can be specified for degrees by the UGC?

I do not think the UGC aims to encroach on the autonomy of the

IITs and other Centrally funded institutions, but that is the consequence of its recent steps.

The problem is that everyone agrees that "good" institutions should be allowed flexibility with their programmes and degrees, so that they can make changes according to emerging requirements. And that "bad" institutions need strict monitoring and restrictions to ensure minimum standards. But how does one distinguish the "good" from the "bad"? What follows is a rule to fit all, which becomes overly restrictive. Is there a way out? The UGC should go back to its earlier practice of only listing the names of degrees. All other restrictions, such as minimum duration, entry qualifications and guidelines should be issued as a separate rule applicable only to universities. But this means that while the IITs and NITs will be spared, all universities, good and bad, will lose flexibility. There must be a wider debate on the best way to maintain standards while ensuring flexibility. Perhaps accreditation could play a role in maintaining standards, reducing the need for regulation. The fact that education is on the concurrent list makes the problem complex.

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Grievance redressed?

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Every university has to appoint an ombudsman under the UGC (Grievance Redressal) Regulations, 2012, Union human resource development minister Smriti Irani told the Rajya Sabha recently. But will this help students?

Irani said that a committee would be formed to look into the grievances. This committee would consist of the University Grants Commission chairperson or his nominee, a vice-chancellor from a central university to be nominated by the Central government on rotation, a VC from a deemed university to be nominated by the Central government on rotation and a joint secretary in the Union HRD ministry dealing with higher education.

Hailing the idea, G Vishwanathan, chancellor of a private university, says that such a move will ensure quality and healthy competition. "There are 100 deemed universities out of the 700 universities. Such a move would encourage healthy competition among all the universities and that will, in turn, bring down the cost of education and improve the quality of education. It can root out corruption and capitation in the education sector. The ombudsman needs to be transparent and focus on all-round development. For example, if one university is doing well, it should get support from the UGC and government."

Appun Lagashu, a north-eastern student enrolled in a private university, says that an ombudsman at the university level is a must. "In our college sometimes classes are not held. We pay a lot of money as fee but I am not satisfied with what I get in the classroom. An ombudsman will definitely help universities like ours."

Some students, however, say that an ombudsman may not make much of a difference. They

doubt the role that such an authority would play in the existing set-up. Ritika Joshi, a second-year student at School of Open Learning, University of Delhi, says that though the body may not be biased and may fairly redress issues in Central or state universities, it may not be able to do much. "All universities already have protocols which they are supposed to follow. Generally, in big universities, the quality of education and faculty are good."

Nandita Narain, president, Delhi University Teachers' Association, says that the presence of an ombudsman should not mean that the faculty is not allowed to go to the court. "It should not be taken as a substitute to courts because that violates a fundamental right. This could help students and faculty in general by fast-tracking the process but it should not be a binding factor."



The ombudsman can root out corruption in the education sector but it needs to be transparent

There are people who feel that going to the ombudsman should be the last option. Manisha Sinha, a parent whose son has joined a private university, says that this move would bring in greater accountability. "However, I feel that a hierarchy must be followed. When one has a problem in the college, it should be tackled there first, at all levels and if nothing works out, only then must one approach the ombudsman. Otherwise, there could be misuse."

According to Sucheta De of the All India Students' Association, the declaration for the new entity is too little, too late. She says till privatisation and profiteering in education are controlled, structural corruption cannot be dealt with such measures.

Smriti tells IIMs to create talent pool for development

BANGALORE: Union HRD Minister Smriti Irani Sunday called on IIMs in the country to emulate efforts of the IIM-Ahmedabad in creating a talent pool of eminent persons across premier institutions who could contribute to national development.

The HRD minister made the call in the course of an address at an IIMs' Conclave featuring chairpersons and directors of 13 Indian Institutes of Management in Bangalore.

The minister's interaction with the IIMs was focused on "issues related to national development goals, admission process in IIMs, review of the institutes, National Ranking Framework for the management institutions, ICT and other pedagogical innovations and initiatives to scale up research in IIMs, especially the socially relevant research," a government release said.

In the course of her address, Irani laid down a 13-point agenda for the IIMs to contribute to national development goals.

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'Micro humans' to replace animals in lab testing

London: Scientists are creating artificial micro-humans that will eliminate the need for using animals in laboratory testing. The artificial human machines, each the size of a microchip, will simulate the response of humans to substances inhaled, absorbed in the gut or circulated through the bloodstream.

Early versions comprising an artificial lung, liver, kidney, heart and gut are already being used to test cosmetics, chemicals and drugs, researchers said.

"Farms" with hundreds of such machines could begin replacing animal labs within three years, doing away with the need for experiments that claim the lives of up to 90m animals each year, The Times reported. "If our system is approved by regulators, then it will close down most animal-testing laboratories," said Uwe Marx, an engineer from Technische Universitat Berlin and founder of TissUse, a firm developing the technology. PTI

INTERVIEW: ANTHONY McGARRY

DEPT OF BIOMEDICAL ENGG, UNIVERSITY OF STRATHCLYDE

Make a career in making a difference

Not many sports enthusiasts may have heard about Farman Basha. An Indian powerlifter, he represented India at the 2012 Summer Paralympics in London. Before that, he won a bronze medal at the Asian Para Games in Guangzhou, China (he was later upgraded to a Silver after an Iranian player was disqualified). Basha, who was in Glasgow for the XX Commonwealth Games, was treated by the National Centre for Prosthetics and Orthotics (NCPO), University of Strathclyde, recently. Basha uses calipers and a wheelchair and when he had a problem with his calipers, the biomedical people at the university sorted it out. In India, the NCPO has been working with Mukti, an organisation that provides prosthesis (artificial limbs) to the amputees and calipers to the polio-afflicted persons. In this interview, Anthony McGarry, academic member of staff in the Dept of Biomedical Engineering at the University of Strathclyde, tells FE's Vikram Chaudhary about the Mukti project and more. Excerpts:

What is the Mukti project?

The Mukti project is organised by a team of students and staff from the Department of Biomedical Engineering at the University of Strathclyde who work jointly with the charitable organisation Mukti in Chennai, whose aim is to give patients the freedom to walk, work and be independent. The project, initiated in 2011, provides training and education to staff at the Mukti clinic whilst developing the skills and experience of Strathclyde students, and involves annual visits of staff with undergraduate students.

How is the Biomedical Engineering Department helping Mukti in furthering the cause of rehabilitating the lives of amputees?

A Strathclyde team of staff and students visit and work in the Mukti clinic for two weeks each year. A donation is made to Mukti to cover the costs of all limbs made by staff and students during this time. The team works at the centre alongside Mukti clinicians and this enables clinical training to be provided to Mukti staff by NCPO staff and students.



What is your long-term goal?

To allow Strathclyde students to work with alternative technologies in different cultures; to transfer state-of-the-art practice to the Mukti clinic; to achieve a step change through continuous upgrade in the delivery of prosthetic and orthotic services provided in Chennai; and to promote a sustainable and collaborative relationship between the University of Strathclyde and the Mukti clinic.

What are the advantages of pursuing an interdisciplinary course like BSc Honours in Prosthetics and Orthotics? What are the career prospects for students pursuing this course?

The course combines the study of the body with engineering principles. It is a rewarding and practical career with development opportunities. The global shortage of prosthetic and orthotic professionals makes these graduates highly employable. Hence, career prospects are very good. Our graduates have established careers in the UK health service, in industry, in education, with international relief agencies and in many different countries overseas. Prosthetic treatment of those with major limb loss is variable in India. Too few appropriately qualified practitioners are available to provide adequate service in the underfunded public sector. So there are ample career opportunities.

Creating value from social networking

How to bridge formal and informal learning

SUMIT MANIYAR

Continuous improvements in personal technology and the growth of online communities have redefined what it means to be social and, consequently, this is re-exploring what it means to teach and be taught. Social media websites such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+ and Pinterest push people to connect, share information, collaborate and develop relationships. However, they can also give the means to wander without direction, discovering people and information that may not serve any value when it comes to learning.

Having said that, there is no denying that people have woven these networks into their everyday lives. About 72% of all internet users are now active on social media and, of this, 18-29-year-olds have an 89% usage. Even the 30-49-year-olds group sits at 72% and almost 60% of 50-60-year-olds are active on social networking sites. If global trends are to be believed, as per comScore, the time spent using so-

cial tools by young audience increased by more than 62% (from 1 out of 13 minutes to 1 out of 8) between 2011 and 2012. This means use of the more traditional web fell by more than 500 million hours during the same period.

Today's active web users or digital natives are demanding pupils who would prefer to be benefited from social networking. Even researchers and academicians are observing the benefits of social networking in higher education. Therefore, there is need to explore how best these social networking technologies can be utilised in educational settings.

The primary edge that learning through social networks provides is two-way interactive communication, something which the multitudes of e-learning platforms have failed to offer. Learning can be

course-centric as well as informal, without a pre-defined leader or curriculum, when topics originate organically from the learners themselves—for example, a group of students who get together to study for an upcoming test or just learn something new. They can get their queries answered by the best of minds in the space, ranging from students, professors as well as non-academicians. Many websites and apps have pre-defined filtering tools in place to whiz out non-credible and non-valuable information.

A lot of social learning portals are coming into existence to satisfy the learning hunger of the youth and facilitate knowledge swapping among the audience. These portals operate on the idea that 'everyone is a teacher' and should contribute the best of their knowledge with others. Couple of similar platforms

are already making noise in the West, such as EFL Classroom 2.0 (a community of thousands of English learners and teachers) and Life Pulp (a social networking website to enrich the user skills via a great deal of motivational content).

Establishing education-based social networks which are non-commercial is another hook which is making them popular amongst the student fraternity. A lot of e-platforms are giving special focus to address the privacy and safety concerns of educators and academicians which allow the experts as well as non-experts to fully exploit the space. To sum it up, these platforms are serving the crying need to make the web more productive and help in developing 21st century competencies. How best people can utilise their presence on the social media is totally up to them. Social networks for learning is not just a fad that will die out soon enough; it is the future.

Critics describe social networking sites as gateway to unsociable and unproductive conduct, but evidence supports these sites develop tech proficiency, improve social skills and cultivate collective learning practices

The author is CFA and co-founder of Function Space, a social learning network

Good salary, bad salary

How much salary is good enough to acquire and retain talent even in the best-paying sectors? This is a dichotomy that resonates across economies and sectors



SANJAY
MODI

Acquiring and retaining human capital is crucial for an organisation's growth and success in a world where there is a constant war for talent. So, does salary become the most compelling tool for employee acquisition and retention? This is a topic of continuous debate and deliberation amongst employers; a dilemma that seldom resolves.

It seems that a satisfactory salary to hire and retain is an elusive global phenomenon. Even in the Middle East and North Africa regions, a significant 70% of professionals believe they are underpaid, with UAE professionals being the most underwhelmed lot by their incomes.

If we consider that cracking the desirable salary is the key to hiring and retaining talent, the booming Indian start-up industry gets us thinking. For the Indian start-up industry is a very good paymaster. A whopping 82% start-ups pay above the market median and yet they have a high attrition rate of 21%. Surprisingly, the most common reason for attrition is pay. Likewise, even in the Indian IT sector, employees were satisfied with their peers and bosses but dissatisfied with their wages, as revealed by the Monster Salary Index Report with WageIndex and IIM Ahmedabad. This is despite the fact that they enjoy the privilege of slightly higher bonuses as compared to the national average.

So, how much salary is good enough to acquire and retain talent even in the best-paying sectors? This is a dichotomy that resonates across economies and sectors.

Dig deeper and one starts unveil-



Illustration: ASIT BAGCHI

ing the layered factors responsible for hiring and retention and their relationship with salary. It is important to find out what actually matters to an employee to come on board and then not quit sooner or later? Is it primarily money or do other intangible factors edge their way into making this decision?

A majority of people in the West have confessed that though salary tops the list of employer selection criteria, money isn't everything. A good career opportunity is also high on the list, followed by benefits such as a good working atmosphere, a good work/life balance and a challenging job.

Similarly, in India, South-East Asia and Middle East job markets, the value at work is not just limited to money. A bunch of factors also come up such as job security, career advancement, base pay and title, learning and development, and the reputation of the organisation. Thus, salary is not just the reason that attracts talent but it is always a combi-

The Indian start-up industry is a very good paymaster. A whopping 82% start-ups pay above the market median and yet they have a high attrition rate of 21%!
Employee retention, clearly, is more about the kind of motivation provided than the amount of money offered

nation of factors—the reason we often see talent making a beeline to work for companies with a high brand value even though they are not the best paymasters.

In the modern workplace, the perception of salary is viewed differently by Generation X and Y. Generation Y has slogged hard for qualifications,

worked hard for promotions and believes it amply deserves the money it is being paid. It has the patience to weigh things between job security and getting a raise. It is ready to wait for promotions to retain its association with a valued organisation.

Whereas Generation X workforce is constantly asking itself "what am I doing here?" Only the answer to this question will determine their employee engagement. Salary is crucial for them to get hired but job satisfaction is equally high on their agenda. Many a times, even retention pays are not enough to hold them back.

Which brings us to the question, are retention pays worth the investment? If pay for performance is not good enough to retain the loyalty of a talent, does it make sense for the employer to dole out an incentive to the employee to do nothing but just remain in an organisation? Many argue that if the company was better run with a fair pay for performance, one would not need to bribe people to stay. Therefore, retention bonuses

should be used sparingly.

In the case of Generation X for whom mobility is an innate trait, it is best to let them go even if they are top performers and treat attrition as the cost of doing business. A window open with a returnee policy could work as an incentive.

Even though the combination of salary, designation and employer branding decides talent acquisition, the reasons for a talent to quit have little to do with money. They are more tilted towards the psychological aspects in relation to an organisation's workings. It is said that employees don't leave companies, they leave managers. Therefore, the ability to retain talented employees is a critical skill for managers where money does not talk much.

One of the reasons for employees quitting an organisation is the lack of vision communicated by their managers regarding the organisation's future and their role play in it. The lack of importance in this big picture leads to a lack of enthusiasm in the current role. Also, displaying no empathy to employees' grievances discourages loyalty towards the organisation. So, listening helps.

Lastly, is motivation 'extrinsic' or 'intrinsic'? Extrinsic motivators such as the traditional carrot and stick rewards (cash bonuses or no salary hikes) have ceased to work. Intrinsic ones such as feeding of internal desires to create a successful product work better. Especially with Generation X one needs to break this myth that financial compensation will be a sufficient incentive to engage and retain good talent or drive high performance.

Therefore, even though salary is one of the compelling factors for talent acquisition along with other intangible factors, its weightage in employee retention is often a misconception.

The author is managing director, Monster.com (India/Middle East/Southeast Asia/Hong Kong)

What does a job-seeker really want in a job?

RITWICK GHOSHAL

What does a job-seeker really look forward to in a job? Does the job-seeker apply because there is a pressing need to get a job—any job—or does the job-seeker try and seek the 'right' job? Do recruiters have the tools to gauge intent from the job-seeker's side? If so, what are these tools? These are the seminal questions that come up when we are trying to seek the answers to solve the 'employment conundrum' in India. I don't think there is a 'silver bullet' anywhere to solve these problems, but it is worth giving it a shot!

India's burgeoning middle class presents a peculiar problem—the tremendous advantages of a demographic dividend—where youngsters go out and seek new pastures, but also the disadvantages of being

educated and yet unemployable because our degrees do not equip us sufficiently. India's schools and colleges are changing, but too slowly. We do not teach our children the 'lessons of practicality'—how should one communicate verbally or electronically, what do we define as interview etiquette, how should one dress when going for an interview, how should a resume be written? The result: a disillusioned workforce that does not know what is good for them in the job market.

The lower white collar, upper blue collar segment in India, in terms of prospective job-seekers, is large—a pool of 70 million which could grow to over 200 million in eight years. The jobs in this segment are typically in customer service, field sales, in-store sales, guest relations, back-office and administrative roles as well as customer care associates with BPOs. These

roles are typically in the salary segment between ₹6,000 and ₹25,000 per month. Yet there is an insatiable demand from employers because they cannot find candidates!

Let me give you reasons which, unfortunately, are home truths.

English is a necessity in terms of communication skills in most of these job roles. Most job-seekers coming from tier 2 or 3 towns do not have those skills. Most job-seekers in these segments say 'yes' for a job interview when they actually mean 'no'—we are yet to find out why, but I think it has to do with the way we are brought up. It's our culture. We are never taught to say a firm 'no' to anything, unlike the West where people can be more direct. Most job-seekers in this segment can't be found on job portals, since a lot of them do not know how to access them, because classified job sites nearly always ask for a resume. Of-

ten the job-seekers, even though they may be graduates, don't know how to write a proper CV!

So, what are the solutions?

Usage of technology and data analytics to approach the job-seeker by helping the person build a profile that aligns to an employer's demands. Collecting data on job-seekers and interpreting it to find the right match by knowing a person's behavioural history. And being in touch through new-age tools like mobile and Facebook applications.

These solutions require a seismic shift in our thinking and the way we teach our next generation. The grey collar generation would also need to relearn and fast, otherwise I am afraid the initial enthusiasm of getting a job will lead to frustration and quick disillusionment.

The author is co-founder and business head, MeraJob India

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Having said that, there is no denying that people have woven these networks into their everyday lives. About 72% of all internet users are now active on social media and, of this, 18-29-year-olds have an 89% usage. Even the 30-49-year-olds group sits at 72% and almost 60% of 50-60-year-olds are active on social networking sites. If global trends are to be believed, as per comScore, the time spent using so-

cial tools by young audience increased by more than 62% (from 1 out of 13 minutes to 1 out of 8) between 2011 and 2012. This means use of the more traditional web fell by more than 500 million hours during the same period.

Today's active web users or digital natives are demanding pupils who would prefer to be benefited from social networking. Even researchers and academicians are observing the benefits of social networking in higher education. Therefore, there is need to explore how best these social networking technologies can be utilised in educational settings.

The primary edge that learning through social networks provides is two-way interactive communication, something which the multitudes of e-learning platforms have failed to offer. Learning can be

course-centric as well as informal, without a pre-defined leader or curriculum, when topics originate organically from the learners themselves—for example, a group of students who get together to study for an upcoming test or just learn something new. They can get their queries answered by the best of minds in the space, ranging from students, professors as well as non-academicians. Many websites and apps have pre-defined filtering tools in place to whiz out non-credible and non-valuable information.

A lot of social learning portals are coming into existence to satisfy the learning hunger of the youth and facilitate knowledge swapping among the audience. These portals operate on the idea that 'everyone is a teacher' and should contribute the best of their knowledge with others. Couple of similar platforms

are already making noise in the West, such as EFL Classroom 2.0 (a community of thousands of English learners and teachers) and Life Pulp (a social networking website to enrich the user skills via a great deal of motivational content).

Establishing education-based social networks which are non-commercial is another hook which is making them popular amongst the student fraternity. A lot of e-platforms are giving special focus to address the privacy and safety concerns of educators and academicians which allow the experts as well as non-experts to fully exploit the space. To sum it up, these platforms are serving the crying need to make the web more productive and help in developing 21st century competencies. How best people can utilise their presence on the social media is totally up to them. Social networks for learning is not just a fad that will die out soon enough; it is the future.

Critics describe social networking sites as gateway to unsociable and unproductive conduct, but evidence supports these sites develop tech proficiency, improve social skills and cultivate collective learning practices

The author is CFA and co-founder of Function Space, a social learning network

HRD Minister Smriti Irani Addresses IIM Conclave in Bengaluru Sets Out 13 Point Agenda for IIMs

<http://indiaeducationdiary.in/Shownews.asp?newsid=31033>

Report by India Education bureau, Bangalore: The Union Human Resource Development Minister Ms Smriti Zubin Irani addressed the IIMs' Conclave with Chairpersons and Directors of 13 Indian Institutes of Managements (IIMs) in Bengaluru today. The interaction focused on issues related to national development goals, admission process in IIMs, review of the institutes, National Ranking Framework for the management institutions, ICT and other pedagogical innovations and initiatives to scale up research in IIMs especially the socially relevant research as also to have greater impact on national policy implementation.

Ms. Irani set out a 13 point agenda for the IIMs on bringing their management expertise in various areas including National Development Goals. She asked Chairpersons and Directors of IIMs to come up with strategies for making the country both manpower ready and teacher ready. She said that along with IITs, IIITs and Central Universities, the IIMs should create a mechanism for a Global Talent Pool of eminent persons, who could then contribute their expertise not only to IIMs but to other institutions in the country as well. She said the IIMs needed to create a knowledge consortium, based on efforts by IIM Ahmedabad, by bringing together various institutions so as to make possible ideas like credit transfer and twinning programmes.

The Union Minister asked the IIMs to develop a special programme for students of the North-Eastern states on the lines of a similar programme developed by IITs, called Ishan Vikas. Smt Irani said that IIMs needed to work with local industries and local communities with a view to enhance their management capacity. She also asked IIMs to contribute their management expertise to such national projects as development of Smart Cities and Green Cities;

The HRD Minister also asked IIMs to develop a framework for ranking management institutions with a view to rank institutions world over as per priorities of the developing countries as also help domestic institutions pursue academic excellence to achieve the goalposts set by the National Ranking Framework.

NIT students clash, several injured, hostel ransacked

<http://www.avenuemail.in/jamshedpur/students-nit-clash-several-injured-hostel-ransacked/57195/>

Jamshedpur : A clash between two groups of students at the National Institute of Technology (NIT) Jamshedpur has left several injured. The hostel was ransacked and several two-wheelers were damaged.

According to sources, the clash took place last night when in hostel number 3 a party was thrown by the students of third year.

Sources said that the fourth year students were also part of the celebration. However, during the party, a third year student allegedly thrashed his senior during an altercation.

Soon, after the incident at late night a group of fourth year students allegedly attacked the junior hostel and beat up several students. The situation turned so volatile that police personnel from three police stations of Adityapur, RIT and Gamharia had to rush to the spot to control the situation.

Without going into specific details, the NIT management said a brawl between the students led to violence following which the police were called in. "We will inquire into the matter thoroughly but at present ensuring law and order on the campus is our immediate concern," said an official of NIT.

The students have also broken several window panes of the hostel. Several bikes were also damaged.

Peeved over the incident, the third year students staged a demonstration at NIT main gate and demanded action against those who attacked them.

Meanwhile, the management of NIT has assured the students that a thorough investigation would be conducted and appropriate action would be taken against the guilty. The third year students later left the dharna site after receiving assurance from the management.

NIT Silchar inks MoU with US university

<http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=sep0114/at056>

SANJOY RAY

GUWAHATI, Aug 31 – Around 3000-odd aspiring technocrats of Assam and some 20 Nobel laureates of the world will soon have something in common!

As part of a proposed collaboration, students of the National Institute of Technology, Silchar will soon be able to vie for a 'Dual Degree' from the University of Illinois (UOI) at Urbana Champaign, USA, which has been the academic home to over 20 Nobel laureates in different fields.

The decks are expected to be cleared for the concept of 'Dual Degree' during the first part of 2015, under which students can pursue half the duration of the course in one university and follow it up with the other, said Dr Kishor Chandra Satpathy, Librarian of NIT Silchar, while talking to this reporter.

If things go as planned, NIT Silchar will be the first technical institute of the North East to introduce the concept.

He said, "As part of the proposed exchange programme, top brains of the world would become part of the faculty team for the students of NIT Silchar."

In fact, a team of the UOI is scheduled to visit NIT Silchar sometime in January next year, said Dr Satpathy.

The University Library and Mortenson Centre for International Library Programme of the UOI at Urbana Champaign, USA, has already signed an MoU with NIT Silchar, which is constructing one of the biggest and costliest academic libraries in the country with one lakh square feet carpet area. The estimated cost of the building is Rs 44 crore.

Nearly 60 per cent of the work has been completed and it will take another year for the entire set up to come up in a full-fledged manner,

"Over 20 individuals associated with the University went on to bag the Nobel Prize for their path-breaking works in their respective fields and it is now set to change the way our students think and work," said Dr Kishor Chandra Satpathy.

"They would now have access to a library which will be in line with the University library, which is regarded as the best in the world," said Dr Satpathy.

The main purpose of this MoU is to facilitate the creation of a world-class, innovative, inviting and flexible library system to enhance campus learning, support research, and provide community outreach and service at NIT Silchar, through consultation and collaboration with the University Library of the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign, USA.

National Board of Accreditation Killing Morale of NITs

<http://www.newindianexpress.com/states/karnataka/National-Board-of-Accreditation-Killing-Morale-of-NITs/2014/09/01/article2408762.ece>

MANGALORE: Many working in the National Institutes of Technology (NITs) and IIT-level institutions have expressed apprehensions over the competency of the National Board of Accreditation (NBA) to evaluate the competency of its mentors and stakeholders.

The NBA, put together by the Centre, have started their evaluation of engineering colleges all over the country. First on the agenda was the creamy layer institutions like the NITs, followed by the deemed and private universities and individual engineering colleges under scheduled universities.

The NBA's efforts to ensure equivalency of engineering courses with that of the foreign countries so as to allow Indian engineers to practice in other parts of the world had delighted the students.

Head of the Chemical Engineering department NITK Dr G Srinikethan told Express: "On the basis of the extensive deliberations with the mentors and the stakeholders, the NBA adopted a two-tier outcome based accreditation process for all the programmes under its purview. It introduced an outcome-based accreditation, rather than output or infrastructure based. When we say outcome based, it refers to the quality of graduates after their graduation, technical skill-set. The NBA defined graduate attributes and soft skill-set. We know that graduates from many elite engineering institutions in India have those attributes and qualities which are on par with any other international institutions. Therefore, NBA recognised 220 top engineering colleges as TIER 1 institutions, i.e., the teaching learning methodology in these institutions are based on Programme Outcomes and Programme Educational Objectives. However, these 220 institutions must submit a Self Assessment Report (SAR) to NBA to get TIER 1 status."

But the evaluators were unaware of the credit-based and electives-based flexible curriculum structure which is followed in IITs and NITs. And when the NBA visited these institutions for evaluation it become a nightmare for any department in the colleges to justify their teaching-learning process, he said. Such misunderstandings are inevitable because evaluators nominated by the NBA were from institutions other than IITs and NITs, who are neither expert in the field nor exposed to curriculum followed in world class institutes, he added.

Recently NIT-Trichy and NIT Karnataka (NITK) went through this process and faced such evaluators. The evaluators had no clue on the outcome-based system which has been running over the decade in all NITs and as a result NIT Trichy did not get accreditation for all programmes except one.

The evaluators flooded NITK with negative comments on curriculum and laboratories and questioned its teaching-learning process. The comments were baseless because curriculum was flexible just as in any other international level institution, where students were encouraged and guided to take up self study - say teachers who have been met by the NBA evaluators.

Delhi chairperson of the NBA Dr Surendra Prasad (former director IIT Delhi) told Express: "Accreditation was a long process and had many steps starting from the institutions applying for accreditation. We form the evaluation teams, choosing experts from the institutions, there is no hard and fast rule that they should be from the NITs or IITs.

And almost certainly we do train the experts in the process of evaluation and eliciting information from the institutions. In the case of Trichy and NITK the process of evaluation were on and as far as my knowledge goes NIT Trichy had applied for only four branches.

It was the endeavour of the NBA to make the Indian technical institutes to rise to the international standards by improving their total outlook and incorporating international academic standards.” Former teachers and heads of the NITK and who are now heading IITs as senior faculties have also complained of bias as well as lack of expertise of evaluators in overall accreditation process. They wanted the experts from the IITs and NITs to evaluate their facilities who were well versed with the teaching and learning process and the infrastructure and financials of the institutes.