



Announcements

ASERF has instituted **Dr Stya Paul Young Educationists Award** for honouring Young Educationists who have demonstrated their potential by making an impact on Indian education.

Applications from the eligible scholars are invited for the Award of the year 2010. Click here to download the prescribed format along with the terms and conditions.

Apeejay Education Society announces the opening of Apeejay Stya University

The Apeejay Education Society, with over 40 years of Excellence in education, announces the initial opening of Apeejay Stya University at Sohna, Gurgaon. Sponsored by the Apeejay Stya Education Foundation, the University is currently located in a sprawling picturesque campus with the state-of-the-art infrastructure.

Apeejay Stya University will offer a diverse catalogue of technical, scientific, management and liberal arts courses for the academic session 2010-11. Applicants for admission will be accepted on the basis of comprehensive merit, judged by their academic excellence, their extracurricular achievements, and their utilization of the resources they have had available. As part of the application, the University would recognize a number of examination scores to establish academic excellence, including AIEEE, GMAT, SAT, and SAT II.

For more, visit: www.apeejay.edu/asu

Partnership

Dear Partners,

The Apeejay Stya Education Research Foundation (ASERF) invites news, articles, resource material, opinions and analyses on relevant educational issues that can be highlighted in our by-monthly e-bulletins and on the ASERF portal.

We request if you could spare a few moments of your valuable time to have a look at our website and guide us on our regular initiatives.

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ASPECT**Rules and violations**

The Delhi University Act (Sections 7(4) and 30) requires that courses be introduced through ordinances. Further, Section 31(1) of the Act stipulates: "The Ordinances of the University... may be amended, repealed or added to at any time by the Executive Council: Provided that... no Ordinance shall be made... affecting... any course of study, unless a draft of such an ordinance has been proposed by the Academic Council." Further, Sections 31(4) and (5) state: "All Ordinances made by the Executive Council shall be submitted, as soon as may be, to the Visitor... and the Visitor may, by order, direct that the operation of any Ordinance shall be suspended until he[*she*] has had an opportunity of exercising his[*her*] power of disallowance."

Thus, the Delhi University Teachers' Association (DUTA) says, the letter of May 25 sent by the university to the colleges on the undergraduate science courses is an irregular and illegal act as the matter had not been placed before the Executive Council, nor had the Academic Council (AC) drafted any such ordinance. In fact, the claimed passage of the courses by the AC is itself highly questionable as the basic departmental procedures seem to have been violated as indicated below.

The following is the sequence of events, for instance, in the department of physics that preceded the apparent approval of the undergraduate course in physics for the proposed semester system:

- November 19, 2009: Head of the Department (HOD) D.S. Kulshreshtha called a meeting of the general body of physics teachers from colleges and the university faculty. The majority opined that there were serious limitations in the proposed model, that it failed in all three counts – flexibility, interdisciplinarity and mobility – touted as key advantages of the semester system, and that the teaching community needed more time to deliberate on the issue and hence its implementation be deferred.
- The matter and concerns of teachers were never placed before the Committee of Courses (COC) for the B.Sc (Honours) and B.Sc (Physical Sciences) programme.
- April 8, 2010: A meeting of the COC (Physics Honours) was called by the HOD at a short notice of one day to discuss the revised syllabus. Apparently, when some professors asked when and how the revised syllabus was evolved and who the members who took the decision were since the COC had not been involved, the HOD abruptly called off the meeting. The HOD is also stated to have refused to record the professors' dissent in the minutes, and with the new syllabus not even placed in the meeting for any discussion to take place, the meeting was inconclusive. The COC members also categorically stated that the

committee did not take any responsibility for the syllabus prepared by the HOD. Minutes circulated on May 6, however, recorded that the meeting had been disrupted by one Prof. Brajesh Choudhary of the department. In a letter to the HOD, Choudhary calls the statement "patently incorrect" and seeks to correct the minutes by stating the facts according to him. Several others too sent letters to the HOD on the incorrect minutes circulated.

- April 19: A meeting of the Faculty of Science (FOS) was held to consider the "draft syllabus". Amidst protests by some professors, the dean, Rup Lal, apparently declared that though he was aware that the syllabus had not been passed by the COC, he was taking it as passed as there was "no time" to refer it back to the COC. The dissenting opinions were not apparently recorded. The university website claimed that the FOS passed the course on April 19.
- On May 7, the HOD called another meeting of the COC at a day's notice, which was inexplicable if, as claimed, the FOS, a superior body, had already passed the course. Some college teachers recorded their dissent on the wrong recording of the minutes and reiterated that no agenda papers had been circulated for the April 8 meeting. They also recorded their dissent on procedural lapses and pointed out that it was not proper for the HOD to frame a syllabus without involving college teachers. After lengthy discussions, it was agreed that a subcommittee be formed to carry out the exercise with a time frame of six months. The COC did not pass any syllabus this time either and no subcommittee has been formed to date. In a letter addressed to all the members of the COC, Amitabha Mukherjee, professor in the department, sought to set the record straight by stating that it was only on May 7 that a 70-page course document was tabled for the first time. Since there was no time to go through its contents, there was no question of any informed decision on its structure, let alone a detailed discussion on its contents. There should be no claim that the COC had passed the course, he added.
- May 8: Another meeting of the FOS with less than a day's notice that many did not even receive. Despite the quorum not being complete and protests by many present that the COC had not passed the syllabus, it was declared as passed and dissent was not recorded.

Similarly, the COC for B.Sc (Physical Sciences) has not had a meeting until date to revise its syllabus. In spite of that, a 'draft syllabus' found its way into the meeting of the Standing Committee (Academic Affairs) on May 11 with the statement that the course was passed on April 19.

The story in every other science department is similar. While mathematics and electronics have rejected the proposed format for the semester system and the associated syllabi, other courses have been passed by highly irregular means with the collusion of the HODs despite rejection by the general body of teachers. Protestations and arguments by teachers in the respective

departmental committees about the violations of norms and statutory procedures were of no avail.

As in physics, other revised syllabi too, it is alleged, were bulldozed through in the FOS on April 19 even though they had not been passed by the respective COCs. These syllabi then found their way into the agenda of the meeting of the Standing Committee (Academic Affairs) on May 11 for approval, and were passed. There are also allegations of fabricating minutes of departmental meetings and misuse of teachers' signatures. Now that electronics has been merged with physical sciences, it is not clear who prepared the electronics course.

However, the following specific incidents need to be noted for the record. Following the failure of the chemistry HOD to convene a general body meeting as requested, the teachers themselves called a GBM on April 22 and informed the HOD. The GBM passed a resolution rejecting the undemocratic imposition of the semester system and the revised chemistry course. Despite the fact that in November 2009 the general body of zoology teachers decided to dissociate themselves from the exercise of revising the syllabus, a meeting of the COC was called on April 15 at the behest of the Vice-Chancellor and the course bulldozed through without allowing any dissent.

The staff council of zoology, in its meeting on April 16, unanimously decided that the semester system was not feasible at present as it had not been made with the participation of the majority of college teachers. The botany teachers met on February 2 and reiterated their stand against the introduction of the semester system. In mathematics, the general body of teachers recorded their view in a resolution that the syllabus on the basis of the proposals of the Empowered Committee would result in a serious reduction in content and in the dilution of the Honours course.

In a joint meeting of the COC and mathematics teachers of colleges and the university called by the HOD on May 10, a resolution was passed rejecting the syllabus for the semester system. A resolution dated May 3, signed by many electronics teachers, rejected the revised syllabus.

Source: Volume 27 – No. 13 /[frontline](#)/19 June – 02 July 2010

NEWS

HRD ministry considers merging CPMT, AIEEE

The Union Minister for Human Resource Development (HRD), Kapil Sibal has said that the ministry is considering the merging of the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) conducted Common Pre Medical Test (CPMT) and the All India Engineering Entrance Exam (AIEEE) so that students are saved the bother of sitting for two separate exams.

While Physics and Chemistry will be common for both, the medical student can answer only the Biology paper and the engineering students the Maths paper. He was

speaking at the meeting of the state Education Ministers here today.

Sibal also said that the ministry was presently debating whether it is possible to have one common exam after class XII that will test general awareness and aptitude. For entrance to institutions, class XII marks and this test could be the criteria. The marks of different education regulatory boards could be equalized through a mathematical formula for weightage.

"The common core curriculum required for removing disparity of syllabi that necessitate different entrance exams catering to different boards has already been developed by the Council of Boards of School Education in India (COBSE) for Science and Maths," he said.

Sibal added that "this will give an opportunity to children from economically weaker sections who are not able to avail of coaching and get through the current system of entrance exams."

However, he underlined that this was just being debated at present, as the current system is being seen as unfair for the poor and the under privileged. Sibal also suggested that he was looking at setting up a National Institute for Assessment and Evaluation for the school systems in the country and their syllabi.

For States, it would be voluntary to have themselves assessed by this institute. Along with underlining the fact that a curriculum framework for value education is required, he also called upon schools to give emphasis to physical education by having one class of PE every day.

Source: New Delhi /[indiaedunews.net](#)/18 June 2010

Ministers agree to govt.'s move on pvt. coaching

A meeting of state education ministers on Friday endorsed the Centre's idea of restoring weightage to Class XII performance in entrance tests for professional and other courses to minimise the influence of private coaching.

Talking to reporters after the meeting, Human Resource Development Minister Kapil Sibal said even institutions like IITs are feeling that the influence of the preparatory coaching is so dominating that the best students are left out. The conference also agreed to the proposal of reducing multiplicity of entrance examinations for entry to higher education.

Sibal declared that the AIEEE, the entrance examination for engineering, and the AIPMT, the entrance examination for medical, would be merged and that students will have to take one entrance exam for both the courses. He said the system of comprehensive and continuous evaluation would be extended up to Class X. He noted that a National Institute of Assessment and Evaluation would be set up to advice state boards.

The minister said there would be a core curriculum for science and mathematics and physical education would be made mandatory in schools. A National Vocational Qualification Framework will also be prepared. The state

education ministers also gave a go ahead to the ambitious group housing and health insurance schemes for 60 lakh primary and school teachers across the country.

While the health and life insurance schemes will have contributions from the Centre, the state and the teachers, the groups housing scheme will require contributions from the teachers only. Sibal pointed out how the group housing scheme was being mooted with the help of institutional financiers. It would be implemented by the states with the help of the National Building Construction Corporation.

Under this scheme, a teacher can get a house of 1,000 sq ft at a cost of Rs 15 lakh only. Sibal said Delhi would be the first state to implement it. Left and BSP education ministers opposed the enhancement in the age of superannuation of college and university teachers in the pay revision package. Chief Ministers of Kerala and Uttar Pradesh opposed it on the ground that this would inspire other departments too for an enhancement of age of superannuation.

Source: New Delhi /deccanherald.com/18June 2010

New technical education council established

In order to facilitate State-level planning in the development of technical education, the Tamil Nadu government has enacted the Tamil Nadu State Council for Technical Education Act, 2010 (Tamil Nadu Act 4 of 2010) and established a state council for this purpose. Minister for Higher Education K Ponmudy will chair the council, while Dr M S Palanichamy, former vice chancellor of Tamil Nadu Open University, has been appointed its vice-chairman.

At a press meet on Friday in Anna University where the rank list for counseling was released, Ponmudy said that the new council will look into these serious issues. The main functions of the council would be to co-ordinate and determine standards in colleges and scientific research in technical education, to evolve perspective plans for development of technical education in the state, to forward the developmental programmes of technical universities and colleges to the University Grants Commission (UGC) and the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) and to identify centres of excellence in technical universities. The council has 18 other members, including representatives from the UGC, Directorate of Technical Education and principals of various colleges.

However, its effectiveness is something to watch out for as the minister has continued to take a safe stand on matters of donation being collected openly by private engineering colleges, and the education touts business which continues to thrive as free enterprise.

Source: Chennai /expressbuzz.com/19 June 2010

DTU introduces 3 new M.Tech. courses

Delhi Technological University has announced that it will be introducing three more M.Tech. courses beginning this academic year. The new two-year duration courses that

have been introduced are M.Tech. (Geotechnical Engineering), M.Tech. (Signal Processing and Digital Design) and M.Tech. (Bio-Informatics). Each course would have 18 seats.

The M.Tech. in Geotechnical Engineering would be taught under the Civil Engineering Department. The course has been designed to focus on topics such as understanding of soil and rock mechanics, latest techniques of remote-sensing, use of Geographic Information System (GIS), and Global Positioning System (GPS) in mapping the surface of the earth.

Other topics that will be taught include modeling and simulation of Earth systems to study changes that occur in sub-soil systems and rock dynamics. The M.Tech. in Signal Processing and Digital Design course is being offered by the Electronics and Communication Engineering Department and is good for students who wish to study digital design analysis.

The M.Tech. in Bioinformatics would be taught by the Biotechnology Department. The course deals with interdisciplinary topics wherein fields of science such as Biology, Computer Science and Information Technology are merged together. The eligibility criteria for students who wish to study this course is a minimum of 60 percent marks in the qualifying examination and a valid Graduate Aptitude Test in Engineering (GATE). Applicant would be shortlisted on the basis of their performance in GATE as well as a personal interview.

Source: New Delhi /indiaedunews.net/19 June 2010

Educational finance corpus inching towards reality

A proposal to set up an initial corpus of Rs.5,500 crore to provide cheaper educational and institutional loans got strong backing from the states on Friday.

Human Resource Development (HRD) Minister Kapil Sibal said that all states have welcomed the proposal. He was talking to reporters after a meeting of the National Foundation for Teachers' Welfare attended by state education ministers. "Formation of a National Education Finance Corporation (NEFC) is an ongoing process, it will be taken up with the finance ministry and the Planning Commission," Sibal said.

The proposed NEFC corpus will focus on re-financing banks to provide education and institutional loans at lower interest rates with longer loan repayment time. It will be started with an initial corpus of Rs.5,500 crore (Rs.55 billion) and the ministry will infuse Rs.3,000 crore (Rs.30 billion) every year to reach Rs.35,500 crore (Rs.350.5 billion) by 2020.

The state governments' contribution to the fund has, however, not been worked out. "We have asked the state governments to contribute. Now they will take up the issue with their finance ministers," Sibal said.

Under the NEFC, education loans will be available at an interest rate as low as 4 percent for those with parental income less than Rs.4.5 lakh (Rs.450,000) per annum. For

others, the rate will be 7 percent. Loans for those whose parental income is above Rs.12 lakh (Rs.1.2 million) will attract an interest rate of 9 percent.

The present interest rates for educational loans are between 10 and 12 percent. The repayment term will also be increased from the present 5 to 7 years to 6 to 12 years.

NEFC will also provide loans for building infrastructure and other facilities to private and government educational institutions.

Source: New Delhi /indiaedunews.net/19 June 2010

HRD spikes UGC move to let tainted university off

Taking strong exception to University Grants Commission's decision to allow Sri Ramachandra Medical College and Research Institute — a deemed university under CBI investigation for demanding capitation fee — to bring seven more institutes under its ambit, the HRD ministry has said it will not approve the step. In fact, there is a likelihood of the decision being rolled back.

Explaining that the decision was taken after the higher education secretary Vibha Puri Das left the full UGC meeting, HRD ministry has also objected to the commission's interpretation of the CBI case against the university. Basing itself on a communication by the vice-chancellor of SRMCRI, UGC had said that the CBI case was against individuals and not the institute.

But HRD has referred to the letter the ministry wrote to the CBI director last August asking him to investigate the allegation of capitation fee. Sources said the ministry went to CBI only after the institute blamed a lower level employee for demanding capitation fee. "The investigation is completely against the institute and not individuals," sources said.

The sources also pointed out that the CBI in its initial investigation report to the HRD in November 2009, had found allegations against SRMCRI and Balaji Medical College to be true and had recommended cancellation of their deemed university status. CBI had also pointed out at systemic failure and recommended changes. However, the HRD ministry had asked the bureau to give another report.

Source: New Delhi /Times of India/19 June 2010

Sibal proposes merger of entrance tests

In a move that could affect thousands of students seeking admission to professional colleges, the Centre is considering the merger of the Central Board of Secondary Education-conducted All India Pre Medical Test and the All India Engineering Entrance Examination.

The proposal was made by Union Human Resource Development Minister Kapil Sibal at the meeting of the State Education Ministers here on Friday. "This is being done to reduce the multiplicity of entry to higher education institutions and to save the students from sitting for two separate exams," he told journalists at the end of the

meeting. Those students wanting to write both the entrance tests will have the choice to do so.

While physics and chemistry would be commonly tested in both exams, the medical student can answer only the biology paper and the engineering student only maths. He said the Ministry would hold wider consultations on the proposal in the coming year, and if approved, the final modalities would be subsequently worked out to initiate the common entrance test from the next academic year.

Mr. Sibal said the common entrance test after Class XII would test general awareness and aptitude. For entrance to professional institutions, the criteria would be based on both Class XII marks and marks of common entrance test put together.

Underlining the need for State governments also to adopt the system, Mr. Sibal said the marks of different Boards could be equalised through a mathematical formula for weightage. The common core curriculum required for removing disparity of syllabi had already been devised by the Council of Boards of School Education (COBSE) in India for science and maths. "This will give an opportunity to children from economically weaker sections who are not able to avail coaching, to get through the current system of entrance exams," he said, while adding that the proposal was at the debating stage and the need for it had been felt as the current system was being seen as unfair to the poor and the underprivileged.

The Minister also said there was another proposal for setting up a National Institute for Assessment and Evaluation for schools that would serve as an advisory institution for school boards. Further, the Ministry would work on a curriculum framework for value education as examinations "are only a gateway to higher education whereas values last and guide a lifetime," Mr. Sibal said.

Source: New Delhi /thehindu.com/19 June 2010

Govt. stops all polytechnics functioning from BE colleges

Shift system in engineering colleges might come to an end from this year. The state government has decided not to allow polytechnics which function from engineering colleges to admit students from this year.

Interestingly, the evening classes for polytechnics were introduced in 33 engineering colleges with All India Council for Technical Education's (AICTE) permission last year.

In fact, the names of these polytechnics which started functioning from academic year (2009-10) are not included in the list of colleges which will conduct counseling for admissions from June 23. This would mean that they will not be allowed to admit students this year.

Managements complained that no notice was given to them before the state government decided not to include the colleges in the counseling list.

"Neither AICTE nor the state government has communicated to us why we are not allowed to participate in counseling and admissions," said Ravi Kumar, secretary,

Consortium of Private Engineering College Managements Association (CPECMA). The shift system was introduced in engineering colleges with the strong recommendation of the state government last year.

“The state government last year had asked college managements to use their buildings more efficiently by allowing evening classes to be held. Since there is a high demand for polytechnic seats they decided to introduce polytechnic classes in the evening,” said a management representative.

Management representatives said that they would challenge the government decision in court.

Source: Hyderabad /Times of India/20 June 2010

IIM-A developing sports management course

The Indian Institute of Management-Ahmedabad (IIM-A) is developing a course for the management of sports organisations, an official said. IIM-A director Samir Barua said that the one-week course would be offered from the current academic year.

"We are, however, working on developing the curriculum incorporating the requirements of different sports," he added. According to the IIM-A director, India does not have any such course and the organisers of the Commonwealth Games in India had to requisition the services of a foreign expert for the professional management of sports organisations. "This got us thinking," he said.

Barua said the course was being developed by an IIM-A faculty member, Jerome Joseph, himself a former sportsperson. "Sports management would be one of the 11 new short-term 'Management Development Programmes' (MDPs) on offer by the IIM-A in the new academic year which would take the total MDPs on different courses available in the IIM-A to 67," he said. Barua said though the centre had given its green signal to the proposal of opening campuses abroad, the IIM-A was still to firm up its ideas and do an analysis of its resource availability to start such campuses, at least in the next few years.

"We are mentoring the Udaipur IIM and helping it with designing curriculum, faculty training and even faculty support. It is likely to become functional from the next academic year. The centre had already appointed C.K. Birla, the chairman of the Hindustan Motors, as the chairman of the Udaipur IIM board and the process to appoint other directors was already on," he added.

On holding the common admission test (CAT) for various management institutions in the country, Barua said that all the IIMs together had decided that the online CAT test would stay and so would its relationship with Prometric, the agency which conducted the CAT last year. However, corrective will be applied, he added.

Source: Gandhinagar /education.in.msn.com/25 June 2010

CABE backs higher education authority

The Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) on Saturday threw its weight behind the proposed National Commission for Higher Education & Research (NCHER) — an overarching body that will bring all higher education related issues under a single authority. The CABE also endorsed the inclusion of medical education under NCHER despite the Health Ministry's opposition to the proposal.

CABE which has all state education ministers and eminent educationists on its board has, with this seal of approval, paved the way for fast tracking the Bill. The legislation is currently at the draft stage with the HRD Ministry having set up a special task force to go into the matter.

Consensus had so far been eluding the NCHER Bill. "State governments have by and large endorsed the NCHER document drafted by the task force. Some education ministers did raise some issues and they will be submitting their views in writing to the Task Force over the next one month. Once that is done, the Task force will revise and submit a final draft to the HRD ministry which will take a final view and then take the proposal to the Cabinet," HRD Minister Kapil Sibal, who chairs the CABE, said.

Source: New Delhi /Indian Express/20 June 2010

HRD panel to oversee RTE rollout

This National Advisory Council might not be as powerful as its namesake and as freewheeling in its mandate, but it will oversee the implementation of the Right to Education, the single most important intervention in the field of education since independence.

HRD minister Kapil Sibal, who will be the ex-officio chairperson of this 14-member NAC, has cleared the names of eight members. They are Kiran Karnik, former president of NASSCOM; Krishna Kumar, former director of the National Council for Educational Research and Training; Mrinal Miri, former vice-chancellor of North-East Hill University; social scientist Yogendra Yadav; Amita Dhanda, Professor of law, National Academy of Legal Studies and Research, Hyderabad; Venita Kaul, earlier with the World Bank and current head of Centre for Early Childhood Education and Development, Ambedkar University, Delhi; Annie Namala, an activist and head of Centre for Social Equity and Inclusion; and Aboobacker, vice-president of Muslim Education Society, Kerala.

Central rules of RTE stipulate that at least three members should be from amongst SCs/STs and minorities. The rules also say that one-third of the members should be women. One member will be from among persons with specialized knowledge of pre-primary education and one with specialized knowledge of teacher education.

The NAC on RTE will be five ex-officio members -- secretary, school education and literacy, HRD ministry; director of NCERT; vice-chancellor of National University of Educational Planning and Administration; chairperson of

National Council for Teacher Education; and chairperson of National Commission of Protection of Child Rights.

Under the central rules of the RTE Act, the NAC will review compliance with teacher qualification and training. It will also commission studies and research for the effective implementation of the Act and be an interface between the HRD ministry and the world at large in creating awareness and a positive environment for the implementation of the Act.

The NAAC will play a vital role in implementing the curriculum and evaluation procedure for elementary education and ensure that the RTE's stress on all-round development of the child, building up her knowledge, potentiality and talent is maintained by all the stakeholders. Similar panels will be created the state level. Called the state advisory council, each of them will have 14 members.

Source: New Delhi /Times of India/26 June 2010

Information access portal to bring youth, govt. closer

A comprehensive information access portal that will bridge the gap between Indian youth and the government machinery will be developed soon, Minister of State for Youth Affairs and Sports Pratik Patil said on Sunday.

“Youth have the potential to initiate change, but they are often disconnected from systems that have the power to bring into effect those changes,” Mr. Patil said, speaking to *The Hindu* while heading a 100-member youth delegation to China that returned on Sunday. The Minister said “total integrated software” would be developed within a year and that the portal would serve as a youth database.

Any person in the 18-35 age groups will be able to sign up to the service by submitting a set of details to establish proof of identity. Email alerts about all government schemes, scholarships and programmes that fit the profile will be automatically generated.

The portal, which will be available in all official Indian languages, will also host a platform through which youth can ask queries and send suggestions. They will be forwarded to the relevant Ministry and follow-up action will be taken, Mr. Patil said. He added that discussions were on with Indian industry to share employment-related details of youth who register on the site to address the “manpower-shortage and unemployment gap”. Accompanying delegates from various fields of excellence including a number of national youth award winners on the 2nd leg of a 10-day youth exchange visit to China, Mr. Patil called for greater cooperation between the two countries in fields such as higher education and information technology.

At an interactive session between Indian and Chinese youth at the Sichuan International Studies University on Saturday, Li Keyong, president of the University, said: “When most people think of China, it is Shanghai and Beijing that comes to their mind. A greater understanding

of the complexities of the hinterland of China is required, and youth delegations serve as a very good platform.”

The delegates hopped from Shanghai to Hefei and finally to Chongqing and visited sites such as the Shanghai World Expo and the world heritage rock carvings site at Dazu. To mark the 60th year of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries, a ‘Festival of India’ will be organised in China shortly, beginning with an Indian film festival in Chongqing in the second week of July.

Source: /The Hindu/27 June 2010

Disappointed with turf wars over NCHER

The report of the Prof. Yash Pal-led committee on Rejuvenation of Higher Education may be the core of HRD Ministry’s reform agenda, but the eminent academic is “terribly disappointed” with the way “the most important of legislations” for creation of an overarching National Commission for Higher Education & research (NCHER) is shaping up. Speaking to *The Indian Express*, Prof. Yash Pal said he was disappointed with the “turf wars” over the issue and felt that Prime Minister Manmohan Singh “must put his weight behind this crucial reform to see it through”.

The committee had recommended creation of NCHER to replace multiple regulatory bodies in higher education — University Grants Commission, All India Council for Technical education, Pharmacy Council, Dental Council, Bar Council and even Medical Council of India — an idea earlier proposed by the PM-backed National Knowledge Commission. While both the committees proposed that medicine and agriculture be under the purview of NCHER, the Health and Law ministries are against it. Health Ministry wants a separate National Council for Medicine.

“The basis of NCHER from the start was to have one single body for all disciplines so that the same is restored in universities also. IITs must be full fledged varsities and Indian universities should be able to offer course in agriculture, medicine or whichever discipline a student wishes to study. Separation of disciplines will defeat the purpose behind the reform. The PM must step in to correct this because it’s something that will not happen in another 50 years,” Prof. Yash Pal said.

The proposal that NCHER oversee all disciplines was backed by the task force that drafted the NCHER legislation and also by the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) that is represented by education ministers of all states and educationists.

“There is a turf battle on and not enough effort is being made... This is not really a HRD Ministry commission, it is going to be independent of it. It must be remembered that you cannot have medical education divorced from the study of Physics and Chemistry. This part of our report has not been appreciated and I feel I have failed,” Prof Yash Pal said. The task force is likely to submit a final version of the NCHER legislation next month. It is likely to be placed before Parliament in the winter session.

Source: New Delhi /Indian Express/28 June 2010

University teachers will be assessed, graded

From now on, teachers will be graded and assessed annually on their performance and become eligible for promotions and career advancements based on their teaching performance, research work and publication quality.

With the University Grants Commission (UGC) today notifying its "Regulations on Minimum Qualifications for Appointment of Teachers and other Academic Staff in Universities and Colleges and Measures for the Maintenance of Standards in Higher Education", performance of teachers will be assessed on the basis of a Performance Based Assessment System (PBAS) in which scores have been assigned to each sub-dimension or Academic Performance Indicator (API).

As per APIs identified by the UGC and approved by the Human Resource Development (HRD) Ministry, 75 per cent weightage will be given to "teaching, learning & evaluation" activities which will include lectures, practicals and tutorials taken, teaching duties in excess of UGC norms, use of innovative teaching tools and examination duties.

Fifteen per cent weightage will be accorded to "co-curricular, extension and professional development related activities" of a teacher which will comprise student-related, field based activities like NSS/NCC, contribution to management of department, participation in seminars, conferences, short-term training courses and talks.

Further, selection committees will have the option of observing candidates in actual classroom situations or through research presentations.

That apart, API scores are proposed for "research and academic contribution" of a teacher. While research papers, published in refereed journals, will fetch a teacher 15 points per publication, it will be 10 points in case of a non-refereed journal.

Research publications like books, chapters in books and so on will also earn a teacher scores — for example, 50 points for a sole-author publication, 10 points for a chapter in an edited book, 25 points for sole-author subject books by national-level publishers or Central, state government publications.

For sponsored research projects ranging from Rs 5 lakh to Rs 30 lakh across various disciplines, 20 points will be earned by the teachers concerned for each project. Minor projects will earn teachers 10-15 points while consultancy projects will also fetch some 10 points. Relying heavily on self-assessment by teachers, these API scores will be derived from objectively verifiable criteria that will be drawn up by a screening/selection committee. UGC will soon be sending a PBAS proforma to all varsities which will also be free to devise their own PBAS based on it.

Teachers will be able to offer themselves for assessment for promotion once they fulfill minimum API scores — they will also be able to get increments to the tune of 3 per cent

of the Academic Grade Pay (AGP) — as outlined under the Sixth Pay Commission.

State governments have also been asked to amend their relevant Acts within six months to enable implementation of these regulations.

Under the regulations, universities and colleges will set up Internal Quality Assessment Cells within three months and these will keep the annual database for individual and institutional performance. The assessment system will become tougher as teachers move up from Associate Professor level to higher levels but research requirements will be kept lower for college teachers than varsity teachers, keeping in mind variations in available infrastructure.

The regulations ask colleges to assign research time to college teachers and provide necessary infrastructure. Also outlined are eligibility conditions for teachers at various levels from Assistant Professor-level to Principal-level, APIs for each category and the flexibility to appoint reputed academics even if they may have superannuated or may be outside the UGC system.

The G K Chadha-headed committee on pay revision for teachers had recommended teacher assessment, including a provision for evaluation of a teacher by students. This has been dropped in the final UGC regulations in favour of self-assessment alone, in keeping with demands of the teachers.

Source: New Delhi /Indian Express/29 June 2010

545 new technical institutes given approval to offer courses

The All India Council of Technical Education, which has revamped its approval system, on Tuesday allowed 545 new technical educational institutions to offer professional courses including engineering, management and MCA, from 2010-11 academic session onwards.

The approval by the AICTE executive council will see the total seats in various streams go up by one lakh and the number of technical institutes in the country touching 7906, official sources said.

Out of the 545 approved institutes, nearly 60 per cent are in management followed by 30 per cent in engineering and the rest in architecture, pharmacy and hotel management, the sources said.

At present 7,361 technical educational institutions are offering courses to nearly eight lakh students every year.

A total of 2,176 new institutions had applied for approval from AICTE this year. Nearly 1,600 applications were rejected after the institutes were found lacking in several counts, sources said.

"Some of the institutions did not meet the minimum requirement of land and building while another few applicant institutions did not pursue their request for approval," they said.

The institutes can start offering courses from the session commencing from July.

The AICTE had given approval to 1131 new institutes last year.

Incidentally, the AICTE, which has been in news for wrong reasons, has revamped its approval system from this year. It shifted to online registration process and relaxed land requirements for new institutes.

AICTE has launched a new web portal which acts as a single window system for processing of the applications of the institutions for approval.

The aspiring institutes had applied through the web portal and a committee from AICTE inspected the institutes. On the basis of report of the committee, the executive council gave approval to these institutes.

Source: New Delhi /Times of India/29 June 2010

Govt. prepares policy to enforce RTE

Delhi government is now ready with rules for the implementation of Right To Education Act in city schools. According to the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Rules, no government school can deny admission to any child between six and 14 years of age. While the private unaided schools will have to reserve a total of 25% seats for students belonging to economically weaker section. Government will also set up a grievance cell in the state commission for protection of child rights which is also expected to run a helpline for students and parents.

“As the admission process in the city is already over, these rules should come into force from next session. We have a period of three years to complete the implementation of right to education. Meanwhile, we have already brought the no-detention policy in force till class VIII,” said state education minister, Arvinder Singh Lovely. He added that though the policy is already in place in government schools, students in private schools too, cannot be failed till class VIII from now on.

Lovely said the government is still to work out how the private schools will admit children for the 25% seats reserved under RTE. “All students want to go to only a particular set of schools. But under these rules, students and parents cannot insist on getting admission only in a particular school. We also have to see how the cost of educating children under RTE has to be reimbursed to private schools,” Lovely added.

According to the rules, once RTE comes into practice, schools will also have to give a self-declaration to the concerned deputy director of education, stating compliance of the new rules. One of the rules available on www.edudel.nic.in/states, “Schools which do not conform to the norms, standards and conditions after three years from the commencement of the Act, shall cease to function.”

The rules also mention that the terms and conditions for salary and allowances of teachers will be notified by the state government.

Source: New Delhi /Times of India/29 June 20110

Now, colleges to have professors

Now, even colleges will get to have professors — posts, which were hitherto a preserve of the various departments in universities. Earlier, the maximum a teacher could move up to in a college was an associate professor.

This, among other measures, were stated in a new set of norms released on Tuesday by the University Grants Commission (UGC), entitled "Regulations on minimum qualifications for appointment of teachers and other academic staff in universities and colleges and measures for maintenance of standards in higher education".

The new regulations have also created an additional post — senior professor. Accordingly, the new hierarchy in ascending order is assistant professor, associate professor, professor and senior professor.

Also, 10% of the number of posts of professors in a university would comprise senior professors, who have over 10 years of experience as professors, among other criteria.

As per the new provisions, even undergraduate colleges without a postgraduate department would have professors — 10% of the number of associate professors — and would be subject to the same criterion for selection and appointment as those of professors in universities. There would also be one post of a professor for each department in a postgraduate college.

Among other measures for standards, the UGC has made 180 working days mandatory for universities, while the minimum workload for a teacher is 40 hours a week for 30 working weeks. Moreover, the teachers should be available on a daily basis for five mandatory hours as well, while six hours per week should be dedicated for research.

Source: New Delhi /Times of India/30 June 20110

Mrs. Purandeswari calls for increase in the budgetary allocation for literacy

“While making plans and policies both the Federal Government as well as the State governments need to enhance their budgetary allocations in the literacy sector to witness any substantial changes and improvement in the field of education,” said Smt. Purandeswari, Minister of State for HRD, Government of India at an international conference being held at Abuja, from 21-24 June, 2010. She is leading the Indian delegation at the Eighth E-9 Ministerial Review Meeting on Education for All at Abuja, Nigeria. This international conference is being organized by UNESCO and Government of Nigeria. While responding to the discussion on the synthesis of country reports on literacy for development prepared by UNESCO, Mrs. Purandeswari has highlighted that Indian government has earmarked US\$1.4 billion towards adult education from the funds allotted towards education sector during the 11th 5-year Plan (2007-12) and 50% of the plan funds for

education is allotted to elementary education and literacy. Due to these efforts there has been a considerable increase in the overall literacy level.

Mrs. Purandeswari has also stressed the importance of gender gap and informed the gathering that India with its innovative programme called Saakshar Bharat – Mission 2012 is focusing mainly on women in those districts where the literacy levels of women is 50 % or below with a change in the strategy focusing on villages with the responsibility given to the elected representatives to make their villages illiteracy free. To achieve this, Indian government is making every effort to devolve the funds directly to the local bodies and involving the village committees in the implementation of literacy programme wherein it is ensured that 50% of the women take part in the efforts of the village committees in the literacy activities. The National Literacy Mission Authority has taken all the stakeholders into confidence for the successful implementation of the programme which is being monitored by the Prime Minister's Office.

She has also highlighted Government efforts to rope in the private sector in strengthening the resource base for the literacy programme specially under Corporate Social Responsibility. Lastly, she also recounted efforts to achieve synergy within various ministries to bring together the initiatives towards creating demand for literacy among the stakeholders. This Conference was attended by the representatives from Nigeria, Indonesia, China, Brazil, Mexico, India, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Egypt.

Source: New Delhi /pib.nic.in/22 June 2010

10th batch of 20 young Indian researchers to participate in 60th annual meeting of Nobel laureates

20 Indian students nominated by the Department of Science & Technology (DST), Government of India will meet and interact with around 60 Nobel Laureates at the 60th Annual Meeting of Nobel Laureates and students in Lindau, Germany. Since 2001, group of young Indian researchers has been attending the Annual Nobel Laureate Meetings. The Indian participation at this annual meeting has jointly been sponsored and supported by the Department of Science and Technology (DST), the Lindau Council and the German Research Foundation (DFG). This year, the interdisciplinary meeting in the fields of Physiology or Medicine, Physics and Chemistry, will give the group the unique opportunity to interact with the Nobel Laureates at scientific sessions and discussions as well as at social events.

The Lindau meeting (27th June to 2nd July 2010) will be followed by a week long visit (from 5th to 9th July) to German universities and research institutions in Leipzig, Dresden, Jena and Bonn, which is organized and supported by DFG. The institutional visits which are organized by the DFG India Office provide a unique opportunity for the young researchers and students to have first hand information and exposure to the state of

the art facilities at the German research laboratories through discussions with faculty members as well as students. The Indian team of students shall have briefing and de-briefing sessions in Delhi with eminent scientists and dignitaries before and after participation in the Nobel Laureates meeting. Further details of Lindau Program can be viewed at <http://www.lindau-nobel.de/>.

Source: New Delhi /pib.nic.in/23 June 2010

HRD Ministry finalizes scheme for interest subsidy for education loans

HRD Ministry has finalized the modalities for implementation of a new Central Scheme to provide full interest subsidy during the period of moratorium on educational loans for students belonging to economically weaker sections (with parental family income from all sources of less than Rs.4.5 lakh annually) from scheduled banks under the Educational Loan Scheme of the Indian Banks' Association (IBA) for pursuing courses of studies in professional/technical streams from recognized institutions in India. The modalities have been finalized in consultation with the Indian Banks' Association. The Scheme is effective for all IBA approved educational loans sanctioned in form of eligible students' in respect of approval course of studies from the academic year 2009-10.

Under the Scheme, proof of income is required to be certified by authorities to be designated by the State Governments. Accordingly, the Ministry has written to all Chief Secretaries of States/Union Territories to intimate the designated authority/authorities (at the District/Sub-District/Block, etc. levels) to the District Level Consultative Committee (DLCC) so that banking authorities at the branch level where students would be approaching for availing the benefit of the scheme would be aware of the same. All Scheduled member banks of the IBA have also been advised to take necessary action to adopt and implement the Scheme so that the benefits of the Scheme accrue to the eligible students. Canara Bank is the nodal Bank, for the member Banks of IBA, for claiming reimbursement of interests credited to student accounts.

The details of the Scheme as well as the above communications are available on the website of this Ministry at www.education.nic.in.

All eligible students who wish to avail of the benefits of the Scheme are advised to approach the respective bank branch from where they availed of the education loan and complete the necessary formalities including obtaining the certification in respect of annual family income from the competent authority at the Block/Tehsil/District Level, so that the individual student accounts could be credited with the interest due on the Loan for the academic year 2009-10 onwards.

Source: New Delhi /pib.nic.in/24 June 2010

India-UAE to discuss cooperation in pursuit of developing knowledge economy

A high-level India-UAE panel will discuss the potential areas of cooperation between the two countries in the pursuit of developing a knowledge economy at a conclave organised in UAE today.

The conclave will be jointly addressed by Human Resource Development Minister Kapil Sibal and UAE Minister for Higher Education Sheikh Nahayan bin Mubarak Al Nahayan. This will be followed by an expert panel discussion comprising government officials, academics, businesspeople from both countries. According to a statement the forum will focus on exploring diverse perspectives on knowledge economy and discuss the importance of evolving a sustainable economy. It will also address the strength and challenges of the two countries and deliberate on new technology, innovation, business strategy, as well as changing social and economic conditions. Apart from this, the forum will review international experiences, explore opportunities for public-private partnerships in education in both India and UAE.

Source: New Delhi /pib.nic.in/24 May 2010

Setting up of 107 Kendriya Vidyalayas during the eleventh five year plan

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs today approved a proposal for setting up of 107 new Kendriya Vidyalayas during the remaining period of the Eleventh Five Year Plan. The new KVs will cater to about 1,03,000 students throughout the country.

The total financial requirement for construction and operation of these new KVs is Rs.526.99 crore during the 11th Plan with a spillover of Rs.279.48 crore towards capital cost during the 12th Plan.

The Central Sector Scheme of Kendriya Vidyalayas (KVs) was started in 1962 with the objective to provide educational facilities of a uniform standard throughout the country to the children of transferable Central Government employees. The scheme started with 20 regimental schools in 1963-64 and has now grown to have 980 schools, which are pace-setting in nature.

Source: New Delhi /pib.nic.in/24 June 2010

ANALYSIS/OPINION/INNOVATIVE PRACTICE

UPA-2's negligence of higher education

It might have been a good idea to avoid political subservience of higher education and to ensure its autonomy, but recent experiences demand immediate reforms.

The provincial universities have already been lost at the hands of unscrupulous politicians, the central universities

are fast moving towards deep degeneration, writes a disillusioned academic.

On completing a year in the second stint of the United Progressive Alliance government, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh made public the assessment of his government. But both the media and the prime minister glossed over one pertinent aspect of Indian life -- the state of higher education and its administration.

A very high functionary at the University Grants Commission, the chief of the All India Council for Technical Education, the chief of the Medical Council of India, the functioning of the National Council for Teachers Education have all been found steeped in corruption, and irregularities.

There have been allegations leveled against the vice-chancellors of historic central universities like the Vishwabharti Shantiniketan, Aligarh Muslim University and North Eastern Hill University, Shillong. The vice-chancellor of Allahabad University (now a central university, and once called 'the Oxford of the East'), is alleged to have indulged in recruitment-related irregularities. A parliamentarian raised the issue in the Lok Sabha, but the government remains as nonchalant about it as ever.

The UGC and the Central Vigilance Commission have also taken note of all such irregularities, but these bodies do not have the teeth to do anything.

The Nehru Memorial Museum and Library is a most prestigious institution for researchers, directly administered by the Union department of culture (currently under the prime minister). Its director, a reputed historian, has been found to be indulging in irregularities, but angry protests from a cross section of academicians have fallen on deaf ears.

In short, the administrative health of higher education is extremely worrying.

Is the UPA-2 government really sincere about addressing these issues? Going by the official pronouncements, it is really addressing these issues. The National Knowledge Commission, abolition of the UGC and few other such regulatory and funding bodies to merge them in one body of higher education and research, and the draft proposal of the Foreign University Bill are a few steps in the government's efforts towards reforming higher education.

The ground realities are, however, far from satisfactory. Valid questions are being raised whether mere re-creation of the regulatory/funding bodies can really serve the purpose.

There was talk of creating a special tribunal to adjudicate litigation pertaining to higher education, there are also proposals to have all-India competitive recruitment tests for non-teaching officers of universities, but the government is willfully allowing vested interests to keep such proposals confined merely to the level of ideas.

Ironically, such undesirable things prevail when the prime minister happens to have been a professor in one of the

most reputed institutions of higher education, and the minister concerned happens to be a noted lawyer.

Their apathy for reforms in higher education and their neglect in nailing vice-chancellors and other high functionaries of the universities can be gauged easily by looking into the bizarre developments that have recently taken place in some of the above-mentioned universities.

The vice-chancellor of NEHU has been taken as an advisor to the National Advisory Council. Most disconcerting is the matter concerning the AMU vice-chancellor. It is necessary to note that these two universities are supposed to be essentially taking care of the alienation felt by some weaker identities of Indian population groups. Despite the sensitivities attached with these universities, the irregularities are being either ignored or downplayed.

Bureaucrats at the Union human resources ministry overlooked the current AMU vice-chancellor's academic and administrative credentials and approved his appointment in 2007.

The Principal Accountant General (vide AB(C) 09-10/ 249 dated 17-11-2009 to HRD ministry) indicted the VC, the registrar and the finance officer for gross financial embezzlement and other irregularities. It says, 'There is a complete collapse of financial management in the university and the VC and the registrar instead of stopping this frequent financial irregularity themselves became a part of this'. Insiders keep crying for appropriate punitive action. A judicial inquiry has been instituted reluctantly by the government. It has avoided sending these functionaries on leave.

Almost every entrance tests to various prestigious professional courses, conducted by the AMU, sees one or the other kind of irregularities, exposed through the Right to Information Act and the courts, but no deterrent punishment is being given to any of the high functionaries. Irregularities in academic recruitments are more like a routine.

Infosys co-founder Nandan Nilekani in his popular and influential book, **Imagining India**, has rightly pointed out that most undemocratic exercise in democratic India is academic recruitments, to which it should be added, only surviving autocratic medieval monarchs in the Indian democracy are vice-chancellors of central universities.

While there are Constitutional provisions to impeach the President and Chief Justice of India, there is no such provision to remove a vice-chancellor of a central university. It might have been a good idea to avoid political subservience of higher education and to ensure its autonomy, but recent experience demands immediate reforms. The provincial universities have already been lost at the hands of unscrupulous politicians, the central universities are fast moving towards deep degeneration with an increasingly large number of pliant vice-chancellors. The teachers' 'movements' are concerned only about their pay and perks; they hardly bother about academic improvements.

Obsequious obedience and slavish allegiance to the vice-chancellors, with most outrageous forms of sycophancy and flattery for self-promotion are the order of the day at universities. In fact, they are the only way of going higher in academics.

Even the best academicians are alleged to be involved in favouritism and nepotism, not to talk of petty victimisation of those who dare to disagree with them. Fearless violation of rules, statutes, and ordinances are increasingly becoming the norm of the day.

When academics cynically use political opportunism and self-promotion, then one can easily imagine what impact it will have on the prospects of higher education in India! This degeneration is manifesting at a time when India is hopeful of emerging as a knowledge economy.

Nilekani warns us, 'Reforms in higher education can not be bargained away -- they form the bedrock for a vibrant economy, the place from where we can, given the chance, build powerful and sustainable new ideas for our future.'

Source: New Delhi /news.rediff.com/15 June 2010

Mismanagement of Indian management education

The Indian management education system, imported from the United States in the early 1960s, is in a state of crisis. The business schools lack strategic focus, with everyone trying to teach everything – the “everything-to-everybody” model. Adopted by the Indian Institutes of Management and copied by the rest, this model leaves little time for creative thinking. It has also led to faculty shortage and has resulted in low levels of research output and competence, ensuring mediocrity in the system. The schools have become teaching shops, and with the entry of foreign schools it will be time for hundreds of B-schools to migrate to the next emerging area of easy profit.

Whatever be the ultimate outcome of the Foreign Education Bill, it has already served a useful purpose. The bill has succeeded in getting a broad section of educators, politicians, industry representatives and the general public involved in a serious debate on the future direction of our higher education system. The Yashpal Committee Report on Higher Education, the National Knowledge Commission's Report to the Nation, and a few recent research papers already provide a good foundation to carry the debate forward as also a framework to examine the developments in individual academic disciplines. In this article, I will try to briefly articulate my views on the state of affairs in the field of management education in India.

The Imported System

The management education system in India has been broadly following the “American system” ever since it was first imported into the country in 1961. However, not much attention has been paid to basic differences in the two approaches towards management education adopted by different business schools in the United States (US). One approach can be defined as a specialised area-focused approach which is often described as “dominant design” or “cookie cutter” model. This model primarily focuses on

“disciplinary silos” (marketing, corporate finance, operations, decision analysis, etc) and tries to deliver these specialised skills in a management science context. Depending upon the core strength of an institution, the silos may differ from school to school. The second approach is multidisciplinary which emphasises more on managerial aspects of the business (organisational behaviour, management communications, leadership, etc) and this model looks at management education more from the principles of general management. Out of the two approaches, the silo approach is more popular among the American business schools. A cluster analysis of core courses of the top 50 B-schools by Navarro (2008) from the University of California showed that almost two-thirds of the US B-schools fall in this group, offering a very high percentage of functional and analytical courses. This silo-focused-majority grossly ignores areas like soft-skills, corporate social responsibility, entrepreneurship, global environment and other general management subjects. Interestingly, an area like organisational behaviour, which is “represented” at least by one compulsory course in every Indian B-school, is not offered as a compulsory course in almost half of the top US B-schools; such a course does not fit into the cookie cutter model of the schools.

The courses offered in a Masters in Business Administration (MBA) programme (particularly the core courses offered in the first year of the programme) indicate fairly well the approach adopted by a particular school. Philip Broughton in his book mentions “even though most business schools teach much the same stuff, the approach and emphasis vary. Among the top schools, Stanford is known as a place for Silicon Valley entrepreneurs. Kellogg, at Northwestern University, is famous for marketing. If your dream is to build or manage a great American brand, Kellogg is the place. Wharton at the University of Pennsylvania, is for financiers, those with their eyes fixed on Wall Street....The Sloan School, at MIT is for engineers and scientists wanting to turn their ideas into business. And Harvard is about general management. It prepares you to manage and lead all the parts of a business without any particular specialisation” (Broughton 2008: 40). In recent years, as corporate leaders (many trained by the Ivy League) have led the world economy from one crisis to another in quick succession, American B-schools of all types (whether following silo or multidisciplinary approach) are coming under severe criticism and educators are now talking about the need for exploring new models.

‘Everything-to-Everybody’ Model

As indicated above, unlike the US business schools, the Indian B-schools never had any strategic emphasis or focus. Over the years we have created a huge number of management schools and every school is The views expressed here are personal. Abhijit Bhattacharya (abhijit1957@gmail.com) is an independent researcher. Trying to offer everything to everybody Sadly, this is true even for our brand leaders – the Indian Institutes of

Management (IIMs). For example, there is hardly any significant difference in the courses offered and research focus between IIM-Calcutta (IIMC) and IIM-Ahmedabad (IIMA), developed initially in collaboration with Sloan and Harvard respectively. Though coming from the same neighbourhood, the course structure and focus of Sloan and Harvard have been always distinctly different. Both schools have a critical mass of different courses reflecting their distinct identities. By adopting the “combo pack model” or everything-to-everybody model, our management institutes have been trying to combine a generalist model with dominant design, and within the dominant design model all silos are also expected to fire in all cylinders. If an institute has a specific expertise in one silo, say marketing, it still tries to cover all other silos, say operations, finance, etc, with similar gusto. With meagre resources when 800 plus B-schools in India are trying to follow the everything-to-everybody model following their brand leaders, poor quality of management education and its non-viability are a foregone conclusion. Imagine a situation where every neighbourhood grocery store with its scanty resources tries to create a Wal-Mart type operation from its inception and that too, without any external funding support!The internal dynamics of the everything-to-everybody model will eventually create an unmanageable situation even for the brand leaders. As mentioned earlier, the curricula of these institutes contain diverse functional and analytical courses along with various general management and soft-skill courses. Considering the fact that over the years all these areas have achieved very high levels of sophistication (with many sub-areas emerging as separate specialisations), the faculties from individual silos will always make a compelling argument for offering more number of courses from their respective areas. Pressure will grow for introducing many of these new courses as core courses which can provide the foundation for more advanced level courses. In the absence of any institutional focus, it is quite natural that there will always be a tension among different areas to push for more compulsory courses from individual silos. As rational human beings, faculties from each area will always try to offer more core courses to consolidate their positions within the school. Compulsory nature of the core courses also allow faculties to have a secured group of “customers” and hence avoid “market risk”. Thus, which courses are to be offered as core courses will be increasingly determined not so much by students or industry requirements, as by organisational dynamics (read politics). The table below shows how our iconic institutes, the IIMs, is already overloaded with a large number of compulsory courses compared to some of the best B-schools in the US. The situation is much worse with many run-of-the-mill Indian B-schools.

Excessive Teaching

Since the internal dynamics of the model adopted by our B-schools imposes heavy class-load on our students, it obviously provides less time for absorption and original thinking. In a two-year MBA programme, a typical Indian B-school teaches almost twice the number of courses taught

in a reputed American B-school. For example, IIM-Bangalore (IIMB) teaches 18 courses in the first year itself, whereas the total number of courses taught in a two-year programme in a top-notch US school does not generally cross 20. In some low-tier Indian B-schools the total number of courses goes up to almost 60! In order to complete such a heavy teaching load, almost all our institutes teach six days a week taking three classes per day, each of 75 to 90 minutes duration. In contrast, Harvard teaches only 13 classes per week, each of 80 minutes duration in a five-day week. More days and more hours of an Indian MBA aspirant are consumed by classroom teaching leaving little time for creative thinking. The large number of assignments and evaluation that go with every course are making our students experts in cutting and pasting.

Increasing pressure from every silo to launch more courses is forcing our B-schools to “innovate” and create more time within the fixed duration of an MBA programme. Any increase in the duration of the programme does not seem to be a feasible option. Hence, to accommodate newer courses, splitting the terms obviously becomes an easy solution, at least politically, than dropping existing courses and areas (dropping an area certainly is an extremely difficult option for any B-school). Thus, the semester system has already given way to the trimester system in most of our B-schools. IIMA has introduced the latest teaching “innovation” by splitting every trimester further into two slots. It is only a matter of time when others will follow the leader. Some institutes are also regularly encroaching into the late evening hours and often scheduling special lectures on Sundays. This kind of a gurelling class schedule is even marketed as a proof of academic rigour in the institute! Compulsory teaching of too many subjects and mass proliferation of MBA institutes that are trying to teach all these courses are to a large extent responsible for the current shortage of faculty. Many Indian B-schools are totally dependent on visiting faculty and this kind of pure transaction-based model helps little to build quality institutions.

Limited Choice for Electives

On the one hand, if Indian B-schools are indulging in excessive teaching of compulsory courses, then on the other, the students are given a very limited choice for selecting advanced level elective courses. The number of elective courses must actually define the level of academic competition within a business school where different courses must compete with each other for survival. Less number of electives means less pressure on instructors to keep their course ware marketable.

The students in a good US B-school have a lot more options for electives than their peers in India. For example, Wharton offers a whopping 200 electives for selecting only nine, whereas Harvard offers a basket of about 100 electives for selecting 10. Students are also allowed to take courses from other schools of the university and even from other universities, thus raising the level of competition even higher.

In IIMB the number of electives offered is about 66 for selecting 18 courses whereas in IIMA the figure is 89 for about 20 electives. For the students of many lesser known Indian B-schools, elective is actually a misnomer. They have to “specialise” in one area and hence need to select a certain number of electives from that area. Because of the limited number of electives offered in the area there is hardly any scope for selection. Commitment to competition, it seems, is limited only to classroom discussions!

Excessive teaching and less number of advanced-level elective courses are also related to very low levels of research output and consequently, low levels of competence of our B-schools. Lack of competence reduces the income generating capability of a school. It is believed that two-thirds of the income of Harvard Business School comes from non-fee collections, namely, from executive training and publishing. In contrast, for all Indian B-schools, fee collection is the most important source of revenue. Owing to their brand image, the IIMs can still afford to charge a very hefty fee and with subtle government backing, also earn a good amount of revenue from executive training and consultancy from governmental and quasi-governmental organisations. This probably has more to do with bureaucratic risk-hedging than anything else. For the rest of the B-schools, fee remains the only source of revenue.

As the Indian government is opening its doors to permit foreign universities to set up their shops in the country there is a genuine fear that many global brands will invade the country to capture the existing market in India for a reputed international MBA degree at affordable costs. Though some experts are dismissing any chance of our market being swamped by Harvards and Cambridges, it may be too premature to ignore such a possibility. With a continuous decline in the number of applicants for the graduate management admissions test (GMAT), the graph for full-time MBA in the US is only expected to go further south. India certainly offers a good potential for many of the US B-schools to boost their revenues. The current Indian market leaders – the IIMs and a few others – may not immediately face any competitive threat because of their established brand image and infrastructure facilities; however, gradual loss of faculty to some strategy-focused institutions arriving from abroad is a real possibility.

With a slow exodus of the top faculty to such organisations, sustaining the everything-to-everybody model of management education with a reasonable level of quality will not be possible anymore. In the emerging “red ocean” (a term used to describe the bloodbath of me-too products in a limited market space) many tier-II B-schools with good infrastructure will be able to survive only by offering their facilities to foreign institutions and thus converting themselves from education providers to real estate providers. For the rest of the 800 plus B-schools, the day of reckoning has come and it is time to migrate from MBA education to the next emerging field of potential easy money.

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Social service & IT

Technology has tremendous potential in terms of ushering social development. For this to happen people across the socio-economic spectrum should be conversant with technology. Technology firms are best suited to address this need through their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives.

"Different projects that are undertaken as CSR initiatives require specific skill-sets and mindsets. Sometimes the required skill-sets may not be technical in nature. Hence, in most technology firms, including Intel, there is a conscious attempt to link employees to the right causes where they can make a contribution. In other words we try to ensure that all employees who desire to make a contribution can participate in CSR initiatives," says Praveen Vishakantaiah, president, Intel India.

Talking about the nature of CSR initiatives that can accrue within the socio-economic framework of our country Vishakantaiah says, "Needless to say there is tremendous scope in terms of leveraging technological solutions to meet some of the basic development objectives.

But the challenge in India, like many other developing countries, is that a majority of the target beneficiaries cannot comprehend technology. Hence, by and large they are not very forthcoming or responsive to solutions aided by technology.

This mindset needs a sea transformation and this is precisely one area where CSR can play an important role." Vishakantaiah is of the belief that one way of tackling this challenge is by embarking on mass IT awareness programmes for rural communities. "For our part we have introduced the 'Intel Learn' programme whereby rural people are encouraged to engage in community dialogue and exchange views on how technology can influence solutions to their everyday problems," he shares.

Increasing the overall technical competency of the average Indian is another critical ground. In the domain of education, technology firms perhaps have an unparalleled potential in terms of CSR. They can address the education and development needs of specially-abled people by providing specifically tailored e-learning aid.

Public private partnerships with NGOs and governmental organisations that work in this area can be explored to ensure continuity of initiatives. "Distance education has an overarching significance within the scheme of higher education and it is in this area that a lot of support can be volunteered by IT firms," opines Vishakantaiah.

Source: New Delhi /Times of India/16 June 2010

India: Back to the classroom for institution heads

In an ambitious attempt to improve the quality of universities and bring them up to world-class standards, the men and women heading India's newest higher education institutions will be returning to the classroom - to take lessons in leadership.

In a first for India, the Education Ministry is planning leadership training for all top administrators at central institutions that started over the past two years, including the Indian Institutes of Technology or IITs, Indian Institutes of Management, IIMs, central universities and National Institutes of Technology, NITs.

IIT and NIT directors, vice-chancellors of central universities and administrators across all institutions will attend classes beginning in the current 2010-11 financial year when the first leadership programmes will be conducted at select IIMs identified by the ministry.

The management institutes already conduct programmes in leadership, usually for mid-career corporate executives and occasionally for bureaucrats. But now they could be training their own academics.

"India is undergoing a huge expansion in higher education. The new IITs, IIMs and central universities represent the future and building these new institutions will require vision and strong leadership," a senior official said.

The idea has received mixed reactions from the academic community. Govardhan Mehta (pictured), a distinguished research professor at the University of Hyderabad, said there was a need to develop leadership skills among Indian administrators in the higher education sector.

"We do not have enough leaders to take care of the expansion that is needed in higher education. We need leadership, which is internationally competitive," said Mehta. "While I do not know if a classroom programme will help, I certainly feel that exposure to international perspectives and management skills are required."

But cynics argued such programmes rarely served any purpose. "Talking about leadership will not help. You cannot train a dean or a finance officer or a vice chancellor. They should have the vision to expand, grow and compete internationally," said an IIT director on conditions of anonymity.

Other academics believe in the concept of training: Professor Ved Prakash, Vice-chair of the University Grants Commission that oversees universities in India, said training helped hone the skills of administrators and academics. "Certain things like management of universities, best practices, management skills, use of technology and managing human resource are skills that can be imparted through training. A lot of academicians who are given administrative jobs could do with some help," Prakash said.

The UGC in collaboration with UK-India Education and Research Initiative has an annual leadership development programme aimed at senior leaders from UK and Indian higher education institutions.

"Most academics leading institutions today need to think ahead of themselves. They need to imagine a university of 2050 and prepare students, faculty and academic programmes to tackle the challenges of the future," said PC Jain, Principal of Sri Ram College of Commerce in New Delhi. Jain said a one-off leadership training programme could not achieve this. It could only be done through constant sharing of knowledge between institutions - both Indian and foreign.

Source: /universityworldnews.com/19 June 2010

Delhi University rushing reforms

The haste with which Delhi University is trying to effects a switch to the semester system in its undergraduate courses raises many questions.

The extraordinary zeal and undue haste with which a semester system for undergraduate courses in Delhi University is being pushed through by Vice-Chancellor Deepak Pental defies explanation. All in the name of reforms in higher education, the need for which the government has suddenly woken up to after having ignored calls for the same for several years in the past. With just two months to go before the expiry of his term, the Vice-Chancellor seems anxious to demonstrate to the powers that be that he has succeeded in implementing the directives of the government.

That this is at the cost of bypassing the university's statutory norms and shows scant respect for the widespread opposition from the university faculty and teachers of the 83 affiliated colleges does not seem to matter. It was similar haste in the Vice-Chancellor's bid to create space in the university's chemistry department that led to the callous disposal of equipment containing a strong cobalt-60 radioactive source to metal scrap dealers, which caused death and grievous injury.

On May 25, the university's registrar sent a letter to the principals of all the colleges informing them that at a special meeting held on May 13 the Academic Council (AC) had "approved" the syllabi for 12 semester-based UG science courses to be implemented from the academic year 2010-11. The letter was issued though 19 of the 26 elected representatives of the council (nearly all present at the meeting) had submitted a dissent note condemning the manner in which the Vice-Chancellor conducted the meeting. He had disallowed any discussion on the desirability and feasibility of the semester system and declared the syllabi "passed", ignoring the objections raised by many members that due process had not been followed in framing these.

"VC's contempt," the dissent note said, "for the Act, Statutes and Ordinances of the university and his refusal to answer objections raised about the violation of laid down procedures [see box] for making the syllabi is deplorable." Six of the representatives issued a public statement expressing their deep concern and dismay at the manner in which the council meeting was closed.

"According to us," they said, "no courses were passed at the meeting... which was abruptly closed at 00.10 a.m. on May 14." A press statement issued by the elected members said: "Twelve syllabi were declared 'passed' in as many minutes without discussion and amidst protest. We wish to put on record that this haste cannot bring about any qualitative improvement."

A number of elected members refused to vacate the council hall and they staged a sit-in. On May 15, in a letter pleading with them to call off the dharna, the Vice-Chancellor said: "I am aware that we have major differences on the implementation of the semester system and that I have been unable so far to convince you that it is feasible." The members responded by saying that since he accepted that there were differences he should take a fresh look at the issues raised by them. "This situation created by you," they said in a letter, "would have disastrous consequences for the students, teachers and academic standards of the university."

In a letter on May 16, the Vice-Chancellor alleged that the Delhi University Teachers' Association (DUTA) and 20 or 30 other "activists" had been disrupting meetings of the Committee of Courses (COC) and the faculty engaged in revising courses for the semester system and were adopting tactics of intimidation and insult. He, however, offered to discuss the issue on May 18 if they called off their dharna. However, the Vice-Chancellor, it is said, continued to be adamant and unwilling to listen to their arguments.

Communist Party of India (Marxist) leader Sitaram Yechury appealed to President Pratibha Patil, who is also the Visitor of the university, to intervene in the matter. He also forwarded a letter from Abha Dev Habib, a physics professor from Miranda House and an elected member of the Academic Council, detailing the concerns of the teachers.

Yechury's letter did result in a meeting of the President with a six-member delegation that included the DUTA president and secretary, besides the CPI(M) leader, on June 3. At the meeting Yechury reportedly pointed out that the arbitrary actions of the Vice-Chancellor over the last year and a half in pushing through major structural changes without proper discussions were in gross violation of the authority and powers vested in the various bodies of the university provided under the Delhi University Act. It was also pointed out that the apparent use of emergency powers by the Vice-Chancellor in approving the 12 courses was at variance with the Office Memorandum of the Ministry of Human Resource Development dated June 11, 2001, issued with the approval of the Visitor, which forbade the use of emergency powers in routine as well as policy matters and to marginalise statutory bodies. The delegation pleaded that the Vice-Chancellor's directives be stayed and due democratic process be initiated. According to the DUTA, the President/Visitor assured the delegation that the issues raised would be looked into and appropriate actions taken.

The letter of May 25 from the registrar drew another round of protests by teachers. On May 26, a general body meeting (GBM) of science teachers unanimously resolved “to reject the semester system and semester-based courses assembled illegally and undemocratically by the VC, not to participate in any way in the teaching of any [of these] courses and the VC’s unilateral and illegal act of scrapping two B.Sc (Applied Physical Sciences) courses in electronics and computer science and merging them with the general B.Sc (Physical Sciences) course”. It also called for a full-fledged opposition by the DUTA, including boycott of the admission process for 2010-11.

DUTA appeal

The DUTA executive committee, on May 29, decided to appeal to all teachers to dissociate themselves from admissions. It also appealed to all staff councils to prepare timetables on the basis of the existing annual system for all the subjects. On June 4, another GBM of science teachers was held with a good representation of teachers from all streams and all colleges. An important decision taken at the GBM was to hold an open house (tentatively fixed for June 18) to explain to the new entrants and parents the reasons for the teachers’ agitation and their arguments against the semester system.

The evident thrust by the Human Resource Development (HRD) Ministry to introduce the semester system in Indian universities has its basis in the reforms agenda outlined in Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-12) document on Education, which included “universalising the semester system, continuous internal evaluation and assessment to eventually replace annual examinations and introducing Credit System to provide students with the possibility of spatial and temporal flexibility/mobility”. These were also stated to have been endorsed by the National Conference of Vice-Chancellors organised by the University Grants Commission (UGC) in October 2007.

The present Minister, Kapil Sibal, appears determined to implement these recommendations under the arguably fundamentalist belief that these will boost the quality of higher education. While these features have been made mandatory for all new universities, others are expected to adopt them within the Plan period. There is also the added carrot of more funds for the universities that put in place the proposed reforms.

More importantly, the Minister’s commensurate zeal for pushing through the Foreign Educational Institutions Bill should not be lost sight of in this context. Since chiefly American universities, which run on the semester mode, are expected to set up campuses here, the timing of the move to introduce the semester system would also appear to facilitate their arrival.

On January 31, 2008, the UGC asked the university to initiate the process of implementing academic reforms as per the Eleventh Plan. This letter, however, was shared with the Academic Council only in May 2009. But, significantly, the letter said: “Universities are autonomous institutions.... Thus, while... reforms be initiated on priority

basis, the university may also combine with other best practices which the university has evolved over a period of time and found useful in [the] promotion of relevance, quality, excellence and equal access in higher education.” The UGC had also set up a committee under A. Gnanam to evolve an Action Plan for the implementation of reforms.

Following the submission of the report by the Gnanam Committee, the UGC wrote again on March 21, 2009, asking universities and institutions to “consider and adopt” the main steps outlined in the Action Plan. The letter asked the universities, colleges and institutions to draw up a road map and an action plan for reforms in a time-bound manner, subject to a maximum of two years, that is, by the academic year 2011-12. The idea of the two-year transition period came from the Gnanam Committee’s recommendations, which gave two years for Central universities and three years for State universities. But, most importantly, its recommendations for the introduction of the semester system included the following: “Deliberation and resolution on the semester system in appropriate academic bodies of the institution at various levels to develop a time-line” (emphasis added). In Delhi University’s case, it is in this respect that gross violation of norms and bypassing of procedures are evident.

The rush to implement the semester system in the current academic year, when both the Action Plan and the UGC suggested a transition period of two years, and especially when teachers have serious concerns, seems highly irrational. This inexplicable enthusiasm perhaps stems from the following in the UGC’s letter: “[T]he new grant making policy developed by UGC... involves linking of grant making process with adoption of academic and administrative reforms.... Therefore, educational institutions are expected to initiate this academic reform at the earliest” (emphasis added).

The first communication from the Vice-Chancellor to the Delhi University faculty, college teachers and students on the proposal to introduce a semester system for UG courses seems to have been on October 16, 2008, nearly 10 months after the UGC’s first letter. It stated that a special Academic Council meeting had discussed the issue and sought feedback from the different stakeholders. It said that while there was overwhelming support, the need for extended consultations was also expressed as there could be difficulties in implementing the system. Following the UGC’s letter of March 2009, the Vice-Chancellor sent another communication on May 12, 2009, outlining the rationale for the proposal as well as the positive and negative feedback received in response to the earlier communication. While the communication also slept out some of the concerns, there is no evidence of the Vice-Chancellor having subsequently initiated any dialogue or given a road map to address them.

It is also interesting to note that the communications from the Ministry, the UGC and the Vice-Chancellor all seem to cite examples of American and European Universities for implementing the semester system. As S.C. Panda, former head of Economics at the Delhi School of Economics

(DSE), has pointed out in his letter to the Vice-Chancellor, none of these universities is like Delhi University, which has 83 affiliated colleges “with an archaic system of centralised paper setting and evaluation handled by a grossly inefficient examination branch.... The structure and functioning of European universities is so much different from DU.”

The frequently cited comparison with the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), Jawaharlal Nehru University and Hyderabad University, where the semester system is operative, is also not valid. The IITs are isolated, self-contained institutions that are much smaller than Delhi University. JNU has no undergraduate programme and Hyderabad University does not have such a large number of affiliated colleges as Delhi University, as Amitabha Mukherjee of the physics department pointed out.

In a remark that could be considered insulting, with obvious disregard for the teachers' genuine concerns, Sibal recently said that the semester system was being opposed because teachers did not want to put in the necessary hard work. “Sitting in the plush office of his Ministry outside the university, what does he know of the hard work that we put in?” asked Vijay Singh, a history professor and an elected member of the A.C.

Panda also cited the example of Cambridge and Oxford Universities and the London School of Economics (LSE), which do not follow a semester system and yet achieve excellence. “So,” he said in his letter, “it is fallacious to argue that excellence can only be attained if we adopt the semester system.... Instead of addressing the systemic problems and correcting those to make a semester system work, you seem to be interested in introducing the system somehow. We are scared to think that this may lead to chaos and probably you may not be there to redress it!”

“Semester system,” he added, “is beneficial only if it is implemented in a proper environment where admissions are completed on time, examinations are held and results declared on time, continuous evaluation done by teachers is trusted and students have the option of choosing a number of smaller courses within the discipline.... None of these things seems to be happening. Therefore, what one is objecting to is the way the semester system is being bulldozed through in a short span without modifying some of the current practices. Given the complex structure of this university and its enormous size, one is also not clear what exactly can be done.”

“It is wrong to say, as is being made out, that DU teachers are against the semester system or reforms per se,” pointed out Shobit Mahajan, a physics professor. “The issue is one of, given the infrastructure and the support system, what seems feasible and infeasible.” The Delhi University physics department has had, for example, a semester-based PG course for 40 years now, perhaps the first in any Indian university. “PG courses take place within the department and are not widely distributed among colleges as in UG courses, and therefore it is feasible,” said Mukherjee. Similarly, during the 1990s, the

department, along with the university's Centre for Science Education and Communication (CSEC), developed an improved curriculum for undergraduate science courses (Frontline, March 15, 2002). This reformed syllabus was sent to the then Vice-Chancellor as well as the UGC. Both just sat on the proposal for years with no response whatsoever. Similar is the case with the DSE as well, points out Panda.

The Vice-Chancellor had also cited the Bologna Process of reforms in Europe, under which a universal semester system has been proposed. But it must be emphasised that this is still in the stage of being implemented, especially in Germany. But even this transition is happening after years of consultation and discussion across institutions. Even as recently as May 17, following a students' strike in Germany, the German Education Minister, Annette Schavan (said to be a great friend of Kapil Sibal), called for a National Bologna Conference of all the stakeholders to discuss the problems in implementing the reforms. It is precisely this process of debate and deliberation that is evidently absent in the Ministry's eagerness to implement the reforms, and as a result, the semester system is being imposed from above even in the face of stiff opposition.

The Vice-Chancellor seems interested only in changing the examination cycle, from annual to biannual. If the rapid manner in which the revised syllabi has been generated by circumventing the statutory procedures, what will be taught, who will be taught and who will teach are clearly unimportant. In a meeting of the AC on June 5, 2009, where there was no blueprint for the introduction of the semester system, a decision to introduce the system at the UG level from 2010-11 was deemed to have been taken, disregarding the demands of the elected members for a discussion in the AC on the feasibility of the proposal in a large university with the prevalent external examination system.

Without responding to the various concerns expressed by teachers individually and collectively in their feedback to the Vice-Chancellor's letter of October 2008, the Vice-Chancellor set up a 22-member Empowered Committee (EC), which included six elected members of the AC, to work out the modalities for implementation on October 5, 2009. It met on October 28, 2009. A model ostensibly developed by the EC was circulated on November 4, 2009, inviting feedback by November 20, 2009!

According to B.L. Pandit, head of Economics, DSE, as a member of the EC as well as an elected member of the AC, he had raised issues as to who had prepared a semester system with only 24 papers across all subjects taught at the UG level and who had authorised the replacement of the Honours courses with the proposed “major-minor package”, which would imply a substantial dilution of the former and implied a structural change needing a thorough discussion and prior approval of the AC. He had also asked whether the opinions of the UG faculty were taken on board and why decisions were being taken behind the back of the college teaching community.

“Let the university allow enough time for syllabus revision and allow variation across subjects in respect of the number of courses to be offered and also address the logistical problems. Once these issues are taken up and discussed transparently, semesterisation of UG courses can be seen in proper perspective. In the absence of it, it appears that the scheme is being pushed through without weighing the pros and cons,” he said.

A “revised” structure was, however, put up on the website on December 18, 2009, for comments and suggestions. But there was neither a subsequent meeting of the EC nor was any final document deliberated upon or adopted by the AC. In response to the model put up on November 4, 2009, the science teachers requisitioned a GBM on November 12, 2009, to discuss its repercussions on science teaching in the colleges. Failing to receive a response, the teachers prepared a critique of the proposed structure and sent it to four science departments – physics, chemistry, zoology and botany – and to the Vice-Chancellor.

According to the university regulations, the task of framing any new course syllabus is that of the departmental COCs. A syllabus discussed and approved by the COC is examined by progressively higher statutory bodies – first (in case of science courses) by the Faculty of Science (FOS), then by the Standing Committee (Academic Affairs) and finally by the AC. Members of the different bodies have alleged that at every stage the revised syllabi were irregularly passed despite objections and protests. Most pertinently, the basic departmental body, the COC, which would be the most competent one to examine critically a new course or syllabus since it comprises people teaching a given discipline, seems to have been bypassed.

Kapil Sibal, Union Minister for Human Resource Development, appears determined to implement the semester pattern in the belief that it will boost the quality of higher education.

Clearly, if the COCs have been bypassed, somehow syllabi have to be produced at the departmental level to be considered by the FOS. This can only happen if heads of the 12 departments have colluded with the authorities to come up with syllabi that now stand approved according to the May 25 letter (see box). It is precisely for this reason that all the humanities departments, whose heads refused to compromise, have been able to withstand the pressures and reject the semesterisation that is being thrust upon them without following the procedures. Many faculty members of the science departments have alleged that because the Vice-Chancellor is a man of science, he has managed to influence the heads of the science courses that have been passed illegally and covertly.

Rapidly drawn-up courses, and that too not by any properly constituted competent body, will have serious shortcomings. Such a disastrous result has already happened with the revised syllabus for the PG semester course in physics, with 90 per cent of the students failing to get pass marks in one of the core papers! The case of

the new syllabus in the UG semester course in physics is similar. As Patrick Dasgupta, a physics professor in the university department, noted in his dissent submitted to the FOS, the syllabus drawn up by the head makes explicit mention of the private software MATLAB. “If the document goes out as it is, there can be a court case against us on this point,” he said.

Apparently, the syllabus also initially had 60 hours of lectures per semester for every subject. The norm, including in the system in the IITs that is being touted, is 35-40 hours, points out Mukherjee. This was changed after repeated intervention at the FOS meeting to 48 hours of lectures and 12 hours of tutorials. “But even this is considerably more than what we have in M.Sc.,” said Dasgupta. Such badly drawn-up courses will only harm the students instead of improving the learning process.

“It is also in the interest of students' careers that we need to oppose the unduly hasty introduction of the semester system without discussion and debate,” said Abha Dev Habib. But if the Vice-Chancellor continues to ignore the misgivings of the teaching community, and the HRD does not respond effectively to this continuing impasse, the confusing picture that the university will end up presenting to the fresh entrants to the university will only prove detrimental to students and to the university's reputation.

Source: Volume 27 - No 13 /[frontline/19](#) June – 02 July 2010

India: Students crowd the cram schools

Four years ago, 16-year-old Abhay Kumar Bothra travelled 1,500 kilometres from his home in Howrah, Kolkata, in eastern India, to pursue his dream. His destination was the country's coaching capital Kota, in the northern state of Rajasthan.

Two years later, Bothra scored the ninth highest mark in the highly competitive Joint Entrance Examination, the gateway to the prestigious Indian institutes of technology, or IIT, the country's premier technical institutions that guarantee their graduates the best jobs in the corporate sector.

Some 50,000 students from across India converge on Kota every year for coaching, with the cramming industry providing the city with Rs10 billion (US\$215 million) worth of business last year.

“The two years in Kota were gruelling. I ate, breathed and slept IIT. All I did was attend the coaching class. But it was worth it,” says Bothra, now a proud technology institute student.

Not every IIT dream ends on a happy note, though. For every student who qualifies through the entrance exam, hundreds don't and the numbers rise every year. In April, an astonishing 470,000 took the test and only 13,000 qualified.

For the Indian institutes of management, or IIMs, 241,000 students applied this year for some 2,400 places.

While demand for higher education has grown, especially professional degrees in engineering, management, law and

medicine, the number of good institutions has remained static. With increasing competition for limited places, crammers have mushroomed and prospered by promising to give students an extra edge - training them with the sole aim of cracking the entrance test.

Most students spend two years preparing for various entrance tests, costing ambitious parents Rs60,000 to Rs200,000 for coaching and extra for accommodation. So ingrained is the demand for coaching that parents with bright children are often the first to enrol them into cram schools.

"Whether your child is bright is immaterial. Most students who qualify through the entrance exams have been through one coaching institute or other. Unless the admission process is changed you cannot blame students and parents," says Kapila Sinha, who sends her daughter to one of the leading coaching institutes in Delhi.

"Even if you score 90% in class 12 [school-leaving examination] it is not enough to get you a seat in the best universities in India. You have to also simultaneously crack entrance tests.

Where is the time to play, or catch a movie or hang out with friends?" asks Sanjeeda Kaushik who is in her final year of school and is also preparing for medical entrance examinations next year.

Kaushik is among thousands of constantly stressed students. Many cannot handle the pressure. In a shocking revelation in 2008, a health ministry study revealed that 16,000 students had committed suicide over the past three years, mainly because of academic issues.

"Parental pressure is killing children mentally. The most calls we get are from children who are afraid to fail. Even parents are scared that there is no life beyond IIT, or IIM or Delhi University," says Abdul Mabood, director of the youth helpline Snehi,

Competition is so tough that even coaching centres hold their own entrance tests. Ironically, it has become more difficult to get into Super 30 - a coaching centre in Patna, capital of the Indian's northern state of Bihar - than to get into one of the IITs.

In May 11,500 students took the entrance test for 60 places at Super 30, an applicant-to-place ratio of 192:1. By comparison, the IIT ratio was 36:1 this year.

Super 30, set up in 2002, achieved a hat trick this year with all its current 30 students qualifying for the IIT JEE for the third consecutive year, a feat which attracted media attention in Japan and China, countries where competition for top institutions is similarly cut-throat.

Given the size of the coaching industry in India and the demand, cram schools can hire the best teachers they can find often paying them three times the average college professor's salary.

"We get the best students and cannot afford to hire sub-standard teachers," said Senthil Kumar, national marketing head with a leading coaching institute.

Best faculty notwithstanding, coaching institutes have been blamed for the lack of imagination in students entering leading higher education institutions.

"Students, especially from the sciences, don't take school seriously once they enrol in a coaching centre. All their time is spent cramming formulas and question papers till they are experts in solving questions. The coaching culture has abolished the understanding and application of concepts," said Professor Rajeev Kumar of IIT Kharagpur. The number of students who are not extremely bright but qualify has increasingly bothered the IITs over the years. According to MS Ananth, Director of IIT Madras, the institutions were "looking for students with raw intelligence and not those with a mind prepared by coaching class tutors".

"The coaching classes only help students in mastering (question paper) pattern-recognising skills. With this, you cannot get students with raw intelligence," Ananth said.

The government has little control over the private coaching industry. But Education Minister Kapil Sibal has made it clear that admission to professional colleges and universities needs to be streamlined to discourage a culture of cramming.

Sibal has also suggested a single national university entrance test for school leavers, on the lines of the scholastic assessment test in the US, to reduce the burden of sitting multiple tests.

Almost every Indian state has a common entrance test for entry to engineering institutions. Private universities and institutions also hold individual tests. Each university also holds its own entrance tests for various subjects including English, financial studies, business administration and management.

In February, Sibal said national-level entrance tests for students applying for engineering, medical and commerce courses could be in place from 2013.

Some changes have already been brought into the IIT system. In 2006, new eligibility criteria were introduced to make the examinations tougher. Students have to score a minimum of 60% in their final year at school to be eligible for admission, instead of 50%.

The IITs and the Education Ministry are also debating raising the minimum marks to 70-80% to lower the numbers sitting the exam, and reduce stress.

Earlier there were no limits to the number of times a student could sit the entrance examination. Now, a student can attempt the JEE only twice.

Kumar is a vocal opponent of the government's plan to replace the JEE with an aptitude test: "Abolishing the IIT JEE will put rural students at a disadvantage. Most government school students do not score very high percentages in their class 12. So giving more emphasis to the school-leaving exam and bringing in aptitude tests will work in favour of urban students."

Kumar's coaching school charges no fees to its 30 selected students, many of them from rural areas and lower castes. He has now doubled the numbers attending Super 30, to 60

students and, after meeting Sibal on 9 June, is also advocating three chances at the JEE for rural students.

He told Sibal the JEE question paper should be set within the syllabus to enable rural students to qualify. But such measures are merely tinkering about the edges. The problem of ambitious students chasing a small number of prestigious places will not be resolved so easily.

"Abolishing entrance exams and doing away with coaching centres will go a long way in de-stressing children. But the attitude towards exams and success in life needs to change too," says Mabood of the Snehi helpline.

Source: /universityworldnews.com/20 June 2010

Opening education sector a priority

Union Minister for Human Resource and Development Kapil Sibal on Tuesday termed private sector involvement in higher education 'essential' but curbing commercialisation of education was also one of his top priorities. Sibal was speaking at the the convocation ceremony of international students studying in various institutes of the Symbiosis International University (SIU).

During his speech and also while interacting with reporters after the function, Sibal maintained his stand on the need to privatise the higher education sector. "Opening up the education sector is definitely a priority to improve the accessibility of higher education as presently the supply is far lower than the demand," he said.

"We all appreciate and acknowledge that universally accessible and affordable public higher education is an economic and social necessity. But the government is presently unable to make the massive investment needed to realise this vision. The stark reality is higher education can no longer be conceived purely as a public good," said Sibal. Higher education has assumed the nature of private benefit, converting the students to consumers. "Acknowledging this reality, we are doing our best to ensure that the consumers' rights are protected and that they have easy and reasonable access to funds to finance their education," he said.

"The private institutions should serve as an engine of social mobility, meaning that educational institutions or universities should help low income and first generation individuals to access education and become financially stable," said Sibal. He said the Foreign Education Providers' Bill was a step forward to create opportunities of higher education for those who have no access to it.

"While we aim at scaling up the number of students enrolling in colleges to 42 million in 2020 from the present 14 million, still 160 million students will be left out. To give them alternative education, we need investments that may also come through foreign institutes," he said.

Sibal said implementation of the Right To Education was his priority. "It is a historic legislation and is now at the implementation stage. However, it will take time to see the

results. The state governments are also required to frame policies for its implementation," he said.

Source: New Delhi /Indian Express/23 June 2010

Quality education depends on quality performance of teacher

On the fourth day of the minority training programme jointly organised by All India Association for Christian Higher Education (AIACHE) and All India Council for Christian School (AICCS), Father Davis George delivered a key note lecture on 'motivating and mobilising institutional staffs' and 'positive discipline' culminating with an epilogue on 'corporal punishment' by Newman Fernandes.

The session began with a brief address by Mani Jacob, chancellor SHIATS and general secretary AIACHE on basic need of self-discipline and management of motivation in minorities institutions.

Father Davis George in his visual presentation on 'Motivating and mobilising your staff' vividly described it as an important tool for an organisation to put human resources into action with efficiency and stability.

He emphasised on setting goals as a prerequisites for motivation termed as 'smart goals' to build a college climate that encourages performance on communication, inspiration and leadership quality. The key to motivation respond to human needs for love, belonging, self-worth and autonomy, he added.

He discussed Herzberg's theory on motivation and maintenance factors for effective management of time as key to efficiency-we should minimise weakness and maximise strengths, help teachers to enjoy their work with healthy habits. In order to mobilise the institutional staff the motivating visionary leader must be free from negative criticism, prejudice, avoid completion and provide reconciliation with forgiveness so as to attain his dreams fulfilled. Father Davis asserted that quality of education depends upon the quality performance of teacher to initiate discipline with leadership.

Newman Fernandes gave a brief lecture on corporal punishment in which he shared his views with the participants that it results into humiliation to students but management of children at school and home needs corporal punishment. He prophesized John's law views against corporal punishment in which body must be punished to get rid form undesirable behaviour.

Source: Allahabad /Times of India/24 June 2010

Higher education made affordable for poor students

The UPA Government has launched an education loan scheme for poor students pursuing higher education.

This was done apparently to ward off criticism that the government's reforms were turning education into a costly affair. The scheme would be available from this academic session to students whose annual family income would be less than Rs 4.5 lakh. They could avail of a loan from any of

the commercial banks after securing admission to professional courses in India or abroad through merit-based selection process. The MHRD has finalised the modalities in consultation with the Indian Banks' Association.

For studies in India, the courses for which students could apply for loan included graduation, postgraduation, PhD & also professional courses like Engineering, Management, Agriculture, Veterinary, Law, Dental, Medical, Computer also ICWA, CA and CFA. Courses conducted by IIM, IIT, IISc, XLRI and NIFT would also come within the ambit of this education loan.

Expenses which would be considered for loan include fee payable to college & hostel; examination/ library/ laboratory fee & also cost of purchasing books, equipment & uniform.

Travel expenses or passage money for studies abroad would also be considered for the loan along with the cost of purchasing computers, if that is essential for completion of the course. While a maximum amount of Rs 10 lakh would be given for studies in India, it would be Rs 20 lakh for that in a foreign country. Up to Rs 4 lakh, no interest would be charged.

For studies in India and for a loan amount more than Rs 4 lakh, 5% interest would be charged. For those studying abroad the rate would be 15 per cent. Under the scheme, proof of income is required to be certified by authorities to be designated by the state governments.

The HRD Ministry has written to all chief secretaries of states/union territories to intimate the designated authority so that banking authorities at the branch level where students would be approaching for availing of the benefit of the scheme would be aware of the same.

The benefits

- Students whose annual family income is below Rs 4.5 lakh eligible
- Courses include graduation, post-graduation, PhD and professional courses
- College, hostel fees; exam, laboratory and library fees can be counted as expenses
- Travel expenses for studies abroad, along with cost of computers also will be considered for loans
- Students studying in India entitled for a maximum amount of Rs 10 lakh, while those going abroad will get Rs 20 lakh

Source: New Delhi /deccanherald.com/24 June 2010

Educated, unemployable

Why must Infosys, one of the biggest names in the IT industry, which recruits the crème-de-la-crème of professionals from the best institutes in the country, spend \$184 million on training programmes annually or invest up to 30 weeks of residential programmes on engineers it hires?

The answer is simple the need to build employee competency levels. Says Srikantan Moorthy, VP and head, education & research, Infosys Technologies, "We recruit people on the basis of their learning ability. The investment is a non-negotiable.

Besides training we conduct residential programmes to enable our engineers to meet client requirements. The need of the hour is not just for individuals to have strong conceptual knowledge, but also strong application capabilities." His information is, perhaps, an indicator of how inadequate India's education system is when it comes to preparing an individual for a job.

While unemployment cannot be brushed under the carpet, youth employability is no less a nightmare. A lot can be blamed on the education system. As many as 90% employment opportunities require vocational skills, but 90% of our college and school outputs are just cram experts, rendering no less than 57% of India's youth suffering with some degree of unemployability, reveals a recent TeamLease Labour report.

So, if you were looking at the bright side of the picture that just 8% of the youth in India are unemployed, there's hardly a reason to cheer, because 53% of the rest suffer from some form of skill deprivation. That sets back the demographic advantage India could hope to enjoy in future.

"India is coming into its dividend as an unusually young country in an unusually ageing market a young, fresh-faced nation in a graying world," Nandan Nilekani observed in his book, *Imagining India: Ideas for the New Century*.

That's not just another observation. By 2025, 25% of the world's workers will be Indians, points out the TeamLease report. Three hundred and fifty universities, 18,000 colleges and 6,000 ITIs will till then continue to churn out five lakh technical graduates, along with around 2.3 million graduates (or maybe more). Unfortunately, just 10-25% of them will be 'employable', according to the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII).

If that to you seems far fetched, consider this: according to a 2008 report of the Boston Study Group, India by 2012 will have 1.3 million surplus of un-trained and under-educated people and the country will fall short (by 5.3 million) of real talent.

An inefficient human resource development regime in the country, absence of an academia-industry interface, lack of focus on skill development of individuals and an almost non-existent quality assurance framework are the root causes of the poor outcomes of the current educational regime. With no returns expected in terms of jobs, there is a significant drop-out rate leading to an under-trained and under-skilled workforce.

"I opted to work right after graduation as I could see how my seniors were struggling to find a job of their choice and had to make peace with jobs that were underpaying and not worth their efforts," rues 23-year-old Jitesh Bhasin, a BPO employee. His fears are not unjustified.

This trend will result in a deluge of 'shall drop, will work' accumulating at the bottom of the education pyramid. The NSS' 61st round employment data hardly sprung up a surprise when it revealed that in urban India, 207 out of every 1,000 men who completed their graduation or went beyond that remained unemployed, against only 10 men out of a 1,000 who are not literate.

Skill deficit

Consensus on the lack of vocational training in the country impeding competitiveness and productivity of the workforce is easy to achieve among experts. How else do you interpret that only 25% of the engineering graduates, 15% of finance and accounting professionals and just 10% of professionals with any kind of degree are suitable to be employed in MNCs. Incidentally, that finding comes from an MNC itself (McKinsey).

India better pull up its socks. Close to 500 million people, says McKinsey, will need to go through skill development by 2020. As Dilip Chenoy, CEO, National Skills Development Council, says, "It's not education that is primarily responsible for lack of skills. It's probably the lack of systematic approach in skill development and building on whatever education one receives."

The 11th Plan document suggests that due to "the near exclusive reliance upon a few training courses with long duration (two to three years) covering around 100 skills, 80% of new entrants into the workforce have no opportunity for training in skills. 12.8 million population (sic) will enter the work force as new entrants per year. As against this, the present (largely government-administered) system of delivery can only provide training to 3.1 million per year".

The manner in which higher education institutes have grown in the past decade facing difficulty in attracting top-notch faculty, retaining them, and enhancing their skills is worrisome. "Quality has suffered a lot with this expansion," says Amit Bansal, CEO and founder of PurpleLeap, an Educomp-Pearson company that is into entry-level talent management.

Many of them, therefore, do not have the ability to attract the best students. "It is the increasing number of students coming out of the neo- and non-academic managed colleges that contribute to non-employability or under-employability," says Srinivasan.

With the dilution of entrance standards, the overall education quality is being compromised. K Pandia Rajan, MD, Ma Foi Management Consultants, adds how the academic infrastructure in engineering colleges has become very basic. "A quantum leap in engineering colleges due to poor accreditation policies is a big problem," he says.

Another area of focus is lack of soft skills. Shankar Srinivasan, chief people officer, Cognizant, feels that often students coming out of Indian institutes are technically proficient. "But they lack behavioural prerequisites such as

communication, presentation, confidence and other soft skills," he says.

Whether the reforms initiated by the government in terms of PPP model being adopted for upgrading ITIs and a modular employable skills programme with an objective to provide employable skills to early school leavers, existing workers and even ITI graduates works remains to be seen.

Undeniably, the need of the hour is to implement a skill-based education system in place of the degree-based system to sincerely solve the problem of educated unemployment.

Source: [/in.biz.yahoo.com](http://in.biz.yahoo.com)/23 May 2010

School exams to stay: minister

Minister of state for school education Fauzia Khan on Friday said that talk about there being no exams till Std VIII was "false propaganda".

"There will be exams," she emphasised. "Only, the evaluation system has changed from the end-of-the-year exam to a continuous comprehensive evaluation (CCE) that tests a student's understanding, reading, writing and presentation skills."

Khan said the CCE was even more crucial as the final objective would not be the exam but the overall preparedness of the student by way of the teaching offered at school. The evaluation system needed to be changed and this puts an additional responsibility on teachers, she said.

"We have to prepare scientifically designed remedial teaching modules. Similarly, teachers need to be motivated and sensitised to understanding students, especially those who may have behavioural problems," Khan said.

The minister was speaking at the launch of the deputy director (education), Pune region's official website — www.dydepune.com here on Friday.

Khan called for greater emphasis on teachers' training, motivation and sensitisation towards implementation of the Right to Education (RTE) Act provisions, especially those relating to remedial teaching for academically weaker students.

"We all have to work hard and overcome the negative approach towards the enactment," she said.

Referring to the website, Khan said that emerging communication systems like the Internet and call centres have changed the way people study and work. The change also needs to reflect through education, she said.

"We have to accept online processes in education for the immense benefits it promises like transparent and efficient service, check on corruption and person-independent system," she said.

Last year, the government introduced the online admission process for Std XI in Mumbai. "The process did face some glitches but we have now come up with a vastly improved system for the online admissions this year," she said,

adding that the department was eventually moving towards introducing online admissions for Std XI in all cities which have municipal corporations.

Similarly, issues relating to sanction of new schools and sections (one section is equivalent of 50 students), biometric attendance, file tracking, mid-day meal activity and lesson plan for teachers can be addressed through the use of technology. "Teachers need to be prepared to accept the technology and the accompanying changes for the sake of the benefits," she said.

The government has already entered into a tie-up with software giant TCS for setting up village level centres that will issue online birth certificates, death certificates and other documents. These centres can also be useful for distance learning, said Khan.

Deputy director (education) Sunil Magar provided an overview of the newly launched websites and the information posted on the same. Director (secondary and higher secondary education) Bhalchandra Desle, director of Balchitravani Digambar Deshmukh, MLC Dilip Sonawane and joint director (primary education) Rohidas Pote were among those present.

Source: Pune /Times of India/26 June 2010

The heart of education

Another student is driven to death in Kolkata as corporal punishment continues to haunt our schools. There is an urgent need to train teachers in humane, emotionally mature ways of correcting 'misbehaviour'.

"Caning of student callous", "I am sorry for caning: La Martinere principal", "Linking boy's suicide to caning unfair". As the recent tragic death of a student in Kolkata evokes strong emotions, the issue of corporal punishment has once again reared its ugly head. Even though this heinous practice is prohibited under the Right to Education Act, instances of physical abuse repeatedly surface in the media. Beating, caning, ear pulling and making students stand for hours in the scorching sun continue to be default disciplinary measures in many schools.

Glaring lacuna

Obviously, our crying foul and even banning corporal punishment does not deter people from embracing these punitive methods. A glaring lacuna in our educational system underlies this malaise in our country. While schools endeavour to make students literate and numerate, they often fail to cater to the emotional needs of children and teachers. Further, teachers are not adequately trained to handle behavioural issues; as a result, they resort to ad hoc disciplinary strategies that can have tragic consequences. Instead of dehumanising children by using violent disciplinary tactics, teachers may embrace more positive approaches to correct misbehaviour. Just as schools invest effort in drawing up lesson plans for every class, they should also strive to become emotionally literate.

This involves open channels of communication between teachers, students and parents, chalking out clear-cut rules, involving students in decision-making and valuing the needs of individuals. Disciplinary methods like loss of privileges need to be spelled out. Schools may also incorporate emotional literacy as part of the curriculum. Through role-plays, games, stories and reflective discussions, students may be taught to recognise and label their own emotional states. Students may then learn effective ways for dealing with strong negative emotions like anger and fear. Empathy and social problem-solving skills may also be covered in value education classes.

Teachers should also be equipped with skills and knowledge to identify emotional problems in children. And, more importantly, they need to respond sensitively. As Carl Rogers, one of the founders of humanistic psychology, says, "Students learn more and behave better when they receive high levels of understanding, caring and genuineness, than when they are given low levels of them."

That said, how should schools deal with misdemeanours and offensive behaviour? While we may brand teachers who use physical punishment as merciless and inhumane, we have to remember that a teacher's job is far from enviable. For example, imagine a Chemistry master explaining the structure of the periodic table to 60 adolescent boys. A paper rocket lands on the bridge of his nose, almost knocking his spectacles off. "Who threw the rocket?" asks Mani Sir in a terse voice as he hears smirks and giggles. Heads tilt towards the floor. Frazzled, Mani Sir turns towards the board when another rocket hits him. "Nithin Kumar," says Mani Sir, "I saw you throw it." "But Sir, do you have eyes at the back?" asks Nithin as the class cheers.

How should the teacher respond? Dealing with such episodes in an emotionally intelligent manner involves surveying the entire context of the situation. Is there a reason why this class is particularly distracted today? Does Nithin disrupt classes often? What is the child communicating through his body language and tone of voice? Is the child desperate to win peer approval? How is the child faring otherwise? What is Nithin's family background? How do others view him?

When confronted with defiant behaviour, a teacher should not blindly react but respond in a calm and collected manner. Instead of trying to take control, which can end in vain, it may be more prudent to give the child a choice and a chance to maintain his dignity. "Nithin, you may wait outside now and talk to me after class or I will have to send for the Principal." Moreover, teachers have to realise that in trying situations, strong emotions may arise in both the student and teacher. When intense negative emotions arise, they often overrule our more rational side and make us act in ways we may regret later. Thus, teachers have to ensure that they don't succumb to "emotional hijacking", a term coined by psychologist Daniel Goleman.

School heads too have to model emotional restraint. A survey of over 1,500 children in four Indian states by Saath

Charitable Trust revealed the shocking fact that corporal punishment typically has a cascading effect; first the child is hit by the teacher, then the principal and finally the parent, all for the same offense!

Parents too play a significant role in addressing behaviour problems. When parents view the school as an adversary, it is often the child who takes the brunt of the blows as parents and teachers indulge in a reciprocal blame game. At times, parents are not tuned into their child's emotional needs; the "parents know best" attitude sometimes works against the child. Many parents strongly assert that their child is not under any stress or strain even though the child's behaviour tells otherwise. As the child is labelled with a slew of adjectives — wilful, stubborn, difficult, defiant, irresponsible and lazy — her behaviour only continues to worsen, reinforcing the adult view that the child is to blame. I am not suggesting that we condone children's inappropriate behaviour; however, taking a confrontational stand often exacerbates the behaviour we are trying to correct.

Signs of trouble

At times, untoward behaviour is a sign that a child needs help. Repeated behavioural problems are usually a manifestation of strong emotions that are suppressed. Anger, shame, guilt, fear or jealousy may cause a child to behave in socially inappropriate ways. The child may not even be consciously aware of these feelings or may mask his insecurities with a facade of indifference.

We must convey that it is the child's behaviour that is the problem, not the child. Statements like, "You are a nuisance" and "You are the most irresponsible child" may be rephrased as, "Your banging on the table was distracting others" and "You have not brought your books for three days; what can you do to remember to bring them?" When we ask a child to change his behaviour, we need to provide alternatives as to what he can do instead. Changing behaviour effectively takes time. In some cases, professional help maybe required.

Perhaps it is time we reconsidered the purpose of education. The manner in which schools are run suggests that education is perceived as preparation for work. Parents reinforce this notion by emphasising marks, often at the cost of a child's well-being. But if education is viewed more holistically as preparation for life, then we cannot ignore our emotional side. As teacher and writer Haim Ginott succinctly puts it, "Fish swim, birds fly and people feel." The essence of being human is to feel. Thus, education should also address our feeling side instead of focusing solely on cold cognition. Finally, it is the ethos of the school that matters. As psychologist Steve Killick aptly writes, "Schools do not 'teach' emotional literacy, they need to practise it."

Instances of Corporal Punishment

1. 1998: A 12-year old boy lost 20% of his vision in one eye as a teacher flung a duster in Delhi.

2. 2003: A Class 10 student was stripped and beaten by his teacher; the child committed suicide in Chennai.
3. 2007: A Class-12 student is beaten for keeping his legs on a table; the child succumbs to injuries in Udaipur.
4. 2008: An eight-year old student is slapped by his teacher; the child's head hit the wall and he died in Kolkata.
5. 2009: An 11-year-old student died after being made to stand for two hours in the hot sun in Delhi.

Source: New Delhi /The Hindu/27 June 2010

Second-rung B-schools churning out 'unemployable' graduates

Gaurav Kapoor completed his MBA from a Greater Noida institute, but the two year diploma couldn't get him a job he wanted and he finally joined a BPO. He is among the thousands who are virtually "unemployable" as the second rung B-schools they studied in failed to impart the necessary soft skills.

A report from NASSCOM says only 10% of fresh graduates are actually employable. A similar survey of MBA and engineering graduates reveals only 25% of them are employable.

"Only one or two from my batch got placement as they had some good contacts. It is very frustrating," Kapoor said.

"I tried almost for a year initially rejecting the BPO offers. But it was difficult. What is the point of spending a fortune on a diploma which gets you no job. Fresh graduates are employed at the same level as I am," Kapoor added.

According to Nishant Saxena, CEO, Elements Akademia, and guest faculty at the Indian Institute of Management-Lucknow (IIM-L), lack of soft skills and confidence affects the employability factor of students passing out of such B-schools.

"There are some basic elements which are found missing in these graduates, these include soft skills like attitude, business ethics, confidence, communication skills, general awareness, basic managerial skills, domain knowledge and work experience," Saxena said.

He attributes this to lack of exposure. "Students of second rung B-schools lack confidence because they don't have enough corporate interaction in terms of industry visits, internships and guest lectures," Saxena said.

"Almost 70 percent of the faculty has zero industry experience. Even the IIMs are suffering from a faculty crunch. So it is but natural that the lower-rung B-schools find it tough to retain experienced faculty members. 'Many B-schools invite guest lecturers to tide over the faculty crisis, which invites criticism from students,'" he added.

According to Saxena: "There are over 1,000 business schools (B-schools) in the country and, barring the top 50 to 75, most have little to offer in terms of the skills needed to meet the demands of the market."

"Students entering B-schools have high expectations of their first jobs. They don't want to take up a sales job because they feel that with an MBA tag they should start in a high-paying corporate job."

The experience of Shipra Sharma, who completed her B.Tech from a Ghaziabad college, is another example of a disappointed second rung B-school graduate. Sharma told IANS: "I completed my B.Tech but the offers that came my way were only for technical support. I have decided to go for an MBA but I don't know if even that will get me a job."

So, are these soft skills coachable? According to Saxena, only some are.

Exposure to the industry is the best way to impart these skills, he said.

"The challenge that most second rung colleges face is that the major chunk of students are fresher without any previous experience in any domain. Adding to this, average faculty of these colleges also has very limited quality industry experience," said Saxena.

"The best practice may be to get a significant portion of training, at least 25 percent, to be delivered by actual industry experts," he added.

Source: New Delhi /*Times of India*/29 June 2010

Self-assessment will count for promotions: UGC

To bring about a more transparent and objective system of assessing teacher performance and provide incentives for improving quality, the University Grants Commission has announced that teachers will be evaluated on the basis of self-assessment reports on three major counts – their contribution to teaching, professional development and co-curricular contribution; and publications and research contribution.

Teachers will be eligible for promotion from assistant professor to associate professor after a minimum of 12 years, of which three years would be in the grade pay of Rs. 8,000. In addition to securing the minimum qualifying scores in the three dimensions, an assistant professor should have at least three publications. Although a PhD will no longer be a mandatory requirement for promotion as associate professor, teachers in colleges with M. Phil or PhD will require a minimum of two publications and one publication respectively during their tenure as assistant professor.

Similarly, an associate professor in universities will become eligible for promotion to professor after three years subject to their meeting other criteria and having a minimum of five publications.

For selection in open positions, the minimum requirements of research and publications are more stringent than those for career advancement. But teachers will be eligible to apply for open posts of associate professor and professor with 8 and 10 years of experience.

Teaching performance

Teaching performance will have the maximum weightage — close to 70 per cent for a college teacher seeking promotion as associate professor. It will be assessed on the basis of a transparent system — the Performance Based Assessment System — in which scores are assigned to each sub-dimension or Academic Performance Indicator. Universities and colleges will be expected to set up Internal Quality Assessment Cells which will keep the annual database for individual and institutional performance.

Source: New Delhi /*The Hindu*/30 June 2010

Children & the Commonwealth Games

One cannot miss the contrast in the preparations made for implementing the Right to Education and staging the Commonwealth Games.

The law endowing on India's children the right to education (RTE) carried a date. So did the decision to host the Commonwealth Games in Delhi. For the vast numbers of out-of-school children of the city, the law has brought no change. When the schools reopen next week after the summer break, they will be no better prepared to receive and retain the thousands of children who have either never enrolled or were eliminated by the system. Nor will life at school be any more child-friendly for those who have got used to the cramped, often cruel, conditions of Delhi's municipal schools. The authorities have made no preparation for implementing the new law, which seeks to transform India's schools and end the apartheid that divides private from state-run schools.

Under RTE, all private schools and Kendriya Vidyalayas were supposed to offer one-fourth of their seats to children of the poor living in the vicinity. Some private schools of Delhi have done this following an earlier court order, and some have made a provision for an afternoon shift for the poor, which violates RTE. The Kendriya Vidyalayas have taken no steps whatsoever and the Pratibha Vikas Vidyalayas, for which the Delhi government screens children at Class VI, are carrying on with this practice. This too violates RTE.

It can be justifiably argued that the scale of systemic changes the RTE demands would require a gestation period of more than the three months that have elapsed since its promulgation. Fair enough. But one cannot miss the contrast in the preparations made for implementing the RTE and the Commonwealth Games. The authorities have put in an extraordinary effort to stage the games in October. Quite literally, no stone in Delhi has been left unturned to make the event a historic achievement of national glory. The contrast between the apathy to RTE and anxiety for the Games reveals the official meaning of national pride. True, the Commonwealth Games are a one-time event whereas the RTE involves a vast, sustained effort. Both call for a massive investment in physical infrastructure. Preparations for implementing the RTE would mean judicious deployment of available resources and mobilisation of new

ones. Neither process has begun. In the case of the Commonwealth Games, officials have gone overboard to squander a pumped-up emergency budget to dress up Delhi in time to stage them.

Not just the venues where the Games will be held and people will stay, but the city at large is undergoing expensive plastic surgery. Roads and sidewalks are being dug up and redone. Wherever you look, piles of freshly purchased tiles waiting to replace the existing ones greet you. Parsimony is out; extravagance is in. All along Willingdon Crescent (now known after Mother Teresa), raised flowerbeds are being installed. For this, the beautiful and extensive sweep of well-maintained grass stretching from the Teen Murti House to the Lohia Hospital is being removed. Terraced flowerbeds and tiles will cover the stretch. Tiles seem to be the favourite among contractors and officials. Even the ones installed only last year are being replaced. The surroundings of India Gate are witnessing a similar relaying of perfectly acceptable sidewalks with garish cement tiles and sandstone curbs. The story of the Delhi University campus is probably the saddest. Here, an angular, tall rugby stadium now stands facing the old Vice-regal Lodge which was restored to its original architectural ambience only three years ago at an enormous expense. Hundreds of mature trees have been cut down to build an ugly parking lot. Access to it has been provided by destroying another park which, till now, marked the university's platinum jubilee.

No doubt the chaos will soon settle down. The glitter of the Games will erase the memory of all doubts and dilemmas. The city will go on, coping with its endemic problems such as chronic water shortage, air pollution and lack of sanitation. Both the manner and style in which the preparation for the Commonwealth Games have proceeded will exacerbate Delhi's problems. Let us take water shortage, for instance. All along the freshly tiled sidewalks, a strip has been left open for flower bushes. Who will water them after the Games? The dried-up beds will remind children going to school that sustainable development is a nice slogan and a topic to elaborate for marks. The bricked tree enclosures erected to welcome Queen Elizabeth a few years ago along her route soon became convenient garbage dumps. During the days ahead of U.S. President Bill Clinton's visit, a magistrate was sent around in a van to fine anyone throwing garbage on the street. Each time such a thing is done, we bring back to life the British stereotype of Indians as people who will starve and save for years in order to spend millions on a wedding night. It seems we have learnt no lesson whatsoever about the meaning of modernity as an exercise of reason and judgment for human goals. Had these been applied for the staging of the Commonwealth Games, it could have been planned differently, with austerity and warmth, to convey India's original vision and priorities as a nation committed to equality and a new world order.

Schools are going to stay closed during the Games. When they reopen, sports will remain as inaccessible and exotic

as they are now for the majority of children. Playtime will be cut in general, to make up for the closure during the Games. In schools which have the misfortune to be located in the vicinity of a stadium or practice grounds, life has been tough. In one such government school, the sports ground was used for storing cement, bricks and sand for developing a nearby Commonwealth practice field. The Games' contractor chopped down the volleyball poles and left the ground littered with rubbish. For a whole session, children could not play. The coming session promises no relief. This school was lucky to have a playground. Most schools in Delhi have none. And college students are only slightly better placed in this respect. Inspiring the young was apparently not intended to be an outcome of the Games. Like everyone else, children were expected to act as spectators of a five-star extravaganza.

The RTE represents the Republic's dream of recognising every child as an active learner and a national asset. The law assiduously lists the systemic conditions that must be met to realise this dream. These conditions include a room for every class, special classes for older children who were never enrolled, 1:30 teacher-pupil ratio, higher qualifications and in-service training for every teacher, and a child-friendly environment in schools. A lot of hard work should — and could — have been done to meet the RTE standards in Delhi's schools before April 1 when the law was to come into force. Now, after the summer break too, schools and teachers will be no better prepared to receive the tens of thousands of additional children the RTE intends to bring into the system. Nor will teachers have any clearer understanding of what it means to allow children from diverse socio-economic backgrounds to study together.

Private schools will continue grooming children of the richer classes for elite roles. Not one school in Delhi has emulated the example of Sister Cyril's historic achievement of turning the Loreto school in Calcutta into an exemplar institution where children of the poor study with the rich. Many corporate houses have now entered into the business of running schools. Fitted with centralised air-conditioning and close-circuit television cameras, the schools are chilling symbols of India's new apartheid culture. Under this culture, the poor have been thrown out to the margins of cities like Delhi. Their children are supposed to be content with the sub-human conditions which prevail in schools meant only for the poor. The RTE rejects this situation and seeks to transform it so that education becomes a means of accelerating social cohesion rather than conflict. The governments of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, among others, have declared that they do not have the funds to meet the RTE norms. The Delhi government might do the same. Never mind the tiles.

Source: New Delhi /[The Hindu](#)/28 June 2010

RESOURCE

[HRD Ministry clarification regarding newspaper reports alleging misuse of UK grants for SSA](#)

The Department of School Education and Literacy would like to place the following facts for information of the public in the context of newspaper reports alleging misuse of UK grants to SSA.

1. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) is a flagship programme of the Government of India for universalising elementary education for all children in the 6- 14 age group.
2. SSA is supported largely by domestic resources. Since inception the Government of India and the State Governments have invested Rs 91,431 crore in the SSA. SSA was partially funded by Development Partners, viz. World Bank, DFID and EU to the tune of (a) Rs 4700 crore from 2004-05 to 2006-07 and (b) Rs 4330 crore from 2007-08 to 2009-10. Since inception DFID has reimbursed Rs 2500 crore, which represents 2.7% of the total investment under SSA.
3. Expenditure under SSA is incurred as per well defined norms articulated in the SSA Framework of Implementation and the Manual of Financial Management and Procurement. Upto 6% of SSA funds can be spent on office expenses and management such as office equipment, salary and fee of resource persons, rentals for office space and vehicles, etc.
4. SSA funds are released to the States by the Government of India based on their approved Annual Work Plan and Budget (AWP&B). The reimbursement of the expenditures is claimed from the Development Partners based on actual expenditures incurred. The reimbursement claims are also contingent upon completion of annual audits and submission of audit reports. The Development Partners invariably, exercise appropriate checks while admitting reimbursement claims.
5. SSA follows a rigorous and robust monitoring system, which includes:
 - Concurrent financial review by independent agency, namely the Institute of Public Auditors of India
 - Annual Statutory Audit by Chartered Accountants, selected from the C&AG panel of CA firms. The Annual Statutory Audit covers village education committees (VEC) which spend more than Rs one lakh in a three year cycle.
 - Internal Audit by States
 - Quarterly Review Meetings with Financial Controllers
 - Periodic Performance Audit by C&AG. The C&AG audit of SSA was discussed in the Public Accounts Committee in 2007-08; oral and written evidence has been submitted.
6. The World Bank undertook a post-procurement review on sample basis in 2009-10. Findings of this post-procurement review have also indicated satisfactory procurement practices, and no miss-procurement was reported.
7. SSA also has a system of biannual Joint Review Missions (JRM), in which the Development Partners

participate. DFID has been an active participant in all the JRMs. The last JRM was held in January 2010 noted had as its objective review of progress in the implementation with respect to SSA Goals and agreed indicators. The JRM observed (quote) *with appreciation the continued progress made towards SSA goals since the last Mission submitted its report...* (unquote).

8. SSA works on the basic principle of self disclosure and transparency. Since it is a programme with large community ownership and participation, there is emphasis on public display and sharing of information with the public.
9. All cases of deviations from guidelines are dealt with severely. The States themselves have conducted enquiries and lodged FIRs besides special audits commissioned by GoI. Appropriate disciplinary action has also been initiated, where necessary.

The Department of School Education and Literacy is dismayed and shocked at the unsubstantiated allegations in the press on the misuse of UK Grants for SSA. The Department is writing to the Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance and Ministry of External Affairs in this regard.

Source: New Delhi /pib.nic.in/16 June 2010

Amendments to the central educational institutions (reservation in admission) Act, 2006 approved

The Union Cabinet today approved certain amendments to Sections 2, 3, 4 and 5 of the Central Educational Institutions (Reservation in Admission) Act, 2006. The Central Educational Institutions (Reservation in Admission) (Amendment) Bill 2010 will be introduced in the coming session of Parliament.

The proposed amendments to the Act aim at safeguarding interests of the tribal population in far-flung and remote areas of the North-Eastern States by providing a balance between the local policy at the State level and the national policy on reservation. The Amendments would ensure equity and inclusiveness and meet the regional aspirations.

The Central Educational Institutions (CEIs) are facing certain practical difficulties in implementing the provisions of the Central Educational Institutions (Reservation in Admission) Act 2006. These difficulties emanate from the fact that their Statutes already provide for reservation of higher percentage than 15% of the seats for SCs or 7.5% of the seats for STs, owing to the composition of population served by it. In some cases the CEIs which were State Universities earlier, have adopted the norms followed by the respective State Governments which require them to reserve more than 7.5 per cent of seats for STs.

In order to address these problems, the Government has now proposed to amend certain provisions of the Act.

These proposed amendments envisaged are as follows:

- State seats (viz. The seats earmarked to be filled from amongst the eligible students of State in which the

Central Educational Institution is situated), if any, in a CEI situated in the tribal areas referred to in the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution shall be governed by the reservation policy of the concerned State Government in the matter of admissions of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes to that CEI.

- If the seats reserved for Scheduled Castes or the Scheduled Tribes or both taken together in a CEI exceed 50% of the annual permitted strength, that CEI shall be exempt from making any reservation for the other Backward Classes. Further, if such a CEI is situated in the north-eastern States, including Sikkim but excluding the non-tribal areas of Assam, the percentage of seats reserved for the Scheduled Castes or the Scheduled Tribes shall not be reduced from the level obtaining on the date immediately preceding the date of the commencement of the Act; while in case of CEI situated in other areas the percentage of seats reserved for the Scheduled Castes or the Scheduled Tribes in that CEI shall stand reduced to 50%.
- If the seats reserved for the Scheduled Castes or the Scheduled Tribes or both taken together in a CEI fall short of 50% of the annual permitted strength, the percentage of seats reserved for the Other Backward Classes shall be restricted to such shortfall.
- The period for giving effect to the provisions of sections 3, 4 and 5 of the Act shall stand enhanced to six years from three years, as some of the CEIs are finding it difficult to adhere to the said time limit for creation of the requisite physical and academic infrastructure due to a variety of reasons beyond their control and have been requesting for the increase in the time limit.
- The number of seats in a branch of study or faculty in a CEI shall be increased with reference to the number of seats in that branch of study or faculty available for the academic session immediately preceding the date of the coming into force of this Act or with reference to the number of seats actually filled in that session, whichever be less, mainly with a view to avoiding wastage of resources.

Background

All the Central Educational Institutions (other than those exempted under section 4 of the Act,) are, presently, required to reserve 27% seats for the OBCs (excluding "creamy layer"), in addition to 15% seats for the SCs and 7.5 % seats for the STs as also to expand their capacity, over a maximum period of three years, from the academic session 2008-09. Difficulties experienced by some of the CEIs, particularly those situated in the north-eastern States inhabited significantly, in some cases predominantly, by tribal population, and Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University, Lucknow, which has been reserving 50% seats for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes in keeping with the objectives specified in their respective Acts have led to the amendments.

Source: New Delhi /pib.nic.in/17 June 2010

Setting up of an academy of scientific and innovative research by CSIR approved

The Union Cabinet today approved the proposal of Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) for setting up of an Academy of Scientific and Innovative Research (AcSIR) as an institution for imparting instruction and awarding degrees in frontier areas of science and technology. The Bill to set up the Academy will be introduced in the ensuing session of Parliament.

The Academy will primarily focus on research and imparting training in such areas that are not ordinarily provided by the existing universities in India. The curricula, pedagogy and evaluation will be innovative and directed towards creating highest quality personnel in cross disciplinary areas. The Academy will operate on the hub and spokes model with campuses spread across the country, in the 37 CSIR laboratories linked through National Knowledge Network already approved by the Cabinet.

While utilising the existing resources and facilities of CSIR, the Academy will operate on a self sustaining mode. The recurring expenses will be Rs.19.10 crore in the 11th Plan and Rs.61.79 crore in the 12th Plan. There will be no requirement for capital expenditure.

Background

The future leadership in the area of science & engineering would much depend on its strength in integrated and interdisciplinary areas. There is shortage of institutions that offer PhD and other advanced courses in such areas. To fill this gap Govt. has approved the CSIR which would take advantage of the existing state of art infrastructure and scientific manpower of CSIR. The academy would be a world class institution of national importance.

Source: New Delhi /pib.nic.in/17 June 2010

Shri Kapil Sibal moots health insurance, life insurance cover and group housing for country's 60 lakh school teachers: chairs 28th meeting of the general committee of national foundation for teachers' welfare

The Government is mooting a Health Insurance cover and a group housing cover for the 60 lakh school teachers in the country. The Government is also proposing a group housing scheme for the teachers of the country. This was stated by Union Minister for HRD, Shri Kapil Sibal while chairing the 28th Meeting of the National Foundation for Teachers Welfare, here today. While the two insurance schemes will require financial contribution by the centre, the states and the teachers, the group housing scheme will be administered at the central level but will not require financial contribution from the centre or the State Govts.

The Health and Life Insurance Schemes are proposed to cost premium wise, far less for teachers as compared to individual schemes or even schemes run at the state level,

due to the huge scope of the scheme, thus the economics of scale driving individual premiums down. The life insurance cover would guarantee a minimum of about Rs.5 lakh on retirement and Rs.2 lakh on death during service. The health cover, limited to hospitalization of the teacher, spouse, two children and parents, is being worked on two options, either on a maximum cover of Rs. 1.25 lakh, which would mean lesser premium and another option of cover of Rs. 3 lakh, which would mean a higher premium. The group housing scheme is being envisaged to be centrally administered through a portal, with construction to be done by NBCC, land to be bought at institutional rates and group housing societies to be formed by teachers. Thus, while there will be no cost to the Government, the teachers will be able to get quality housing at lesser rates without much struggle or fear of being cheated.

Shri Sibal underlined that this proposal is being formulated to show that the country looks after, cares for and respects its teachers, and that he was putting it on the table for in principal approval of the State Education Ministers, as a majority of the teachers are state government employees. He clarified that he too was yet to seek the approval of the Finance Ministry. The State Education Ministers also welcomed the proposal and the immense benefit that will accrue to teachers, but said that they would be able to communicate formal approval after discussing this with their Finance Ministers

Shri Sibal expressing dismay that the meeting of this foundation was being held after many years, asked the State Education Ministers to allow the ministry to consider bringing in one teacher from every state as representative of that state in the foundation. He said that this would give the foundation the required energy as the teachers would ensure that their own body becomes more vibrant.

Source: New Delhi /pib.nic.in/18 June 2010

Record of discussion of 57th meeting of central advisory board of education

The Fifty Seventh Meeting of the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) was held here today under the Chairmanship of Shri Kapil Sibal, Union Minister of Human Resource Development. Smt. Ambika Soni, Union Minister of Information and Broadcasting, Smt. D. Purandeswari, Minister of State for Human Resource Development and Vice-Chairperson of CABE, Shri Prateek Patel, Minister of State, Youth Affairs and Sports and Ministers-in-charge of Education from various States/UTs attended the meeting. The Board also has eminent educationists, authors, artists, linguists etc. apart from Heads of different autonomous organizations and Secretaries of different departments of the Government of India as its members.

The CABE is the highest advisory body to advise the Central and State Governments in the field of education. The previous meeting i.e. 56th meeting of CABE was held on 31st August, 2009. The minutes of the previous

meeting were confirmed today with a minor amendment of Shri M.A. Baby, Hon'ble Education Minister of Kerala that he was not against the private participation in education but it should be with strict and comprehensive regulations.

The meeting focused on the vision of education for the future with Child Centric education, as mentioned by Shri Kapil Sibal in his opening address. Shri Sibal said that we cannot be slaves of the past and must move with the processes of change. We need to learn from the past; build on it and create opportunities for the future of our children as also the future of the unborn child. While enunciating his vision of child centric education, HRM recalled the very insightful and perceptive statement made by Shri MC Chagla in 1964, when he was Education Minister. He said: (Quote) "Our Constitution fathers did not intend that we set up hovels, put student there, give untrained teachers, give them bad textbooks, no playgrounds and say, we have complied with Article 45 and primary education is expanding...They meant that real education should be given to our children between the ages of 6 and 14" (Unquote). HRM said that the most precious of all resources are our children and we must ensure that they get all the opportunities for their development.

Addressing the meeting, Smt. Ambika Soni, Minister of I&B suggested that the HRD Ministry, for its education reforms incorporate a media strategy. She was of the view that a campaign theme could be developed for Right to Education. She congratulated the HRD Minister for his efforts in developing India as a knowledge society and said that her Ministry would be glad to partner with MHRD to have a nation-wide campaign of empowerment through education.

The meeting focused particularly on the proposed Higher Education and Research Bill, dematting of academic awards, harmonising norms of SSA & RTE, National Vocational Qualification Framework and core curriculum for Science and Maths as also Commerce.

After detailed discussions, the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) took the following decisions: -

- 1.CABE considered the proposal on the draft Higher Education and Research Bill, 2010. It was clarified by HRM that the draft Bill remained the property of the Task Force until it submitted its final proposal to the Ministry. Prof. N.R. Madhava Menon, member of the Task Force constituted by MHRD to follow up on the recommendations of the Committee on Rejuvenation and Renovation of Higher Education (Yash Pal Committee) and the National Knowledge Commission, presented the proposal and explained the modifications proposed by the Task Force after taking into consideration the inputs and suggestions received from various stake holders during the wide ranging process of consultations across the country.

Members of the Task Force also briefed CABE on clarifications in regard to certain provisions raised on behalf of States. It was explained that the proposed NCHER was intended to promote autonomy of

universities by devolving powers hitherto exercised by the existing regulatory bodies, prevent fragmentation of education, promote interdisciplinary pursuit and creation of knowledge, accord a level playing field through norm-based funding for all universities – Central or State, grant powers to States to participate in policy making at the national level through representation in the decision making processes of the proposed Commission etc.

While there was a general consensus in regard to the need to establish an overarching body at the apex level to prevent fragmentation of Higher Education and to promote interdisciplinary pursuits for creating knowledge, CABE decided that State Governments and other members could send in written comments and suggestions within 4 weeks, so that the Task Force could take the same in to consideration, before the draft Bill was finalized and submitted to the Ministry of Human Resource Development for the consideration of the Central Government.

2. CABE considered the proposal on the proposed National Academic Depository Bill, 2010 for creating and maintaining a national electronic database of academic records and awards at no cost to Central or State Government. CABE endorsed the proposal which mandates academic institutions – universities, higher educational institutions, CBSE and States Boards of Education to entrust academic awards with authorized Depository to be appointed under the legislation for secure storage, authenticated access, online verification and efficient retrieval while ensuring confidentiality, fidelity and authenticity.

3. CABE unanimously welcomed the steps taken to harmonise the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) with the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009. CABE expressed solidarity in taking proactive steps for ensuring the educational rights of all children. The Central and State Governments will collectively provide adequate financial resources to meet the challenges of implementation of the Act. In the context of admission of 25% children from disadvantaged groups and weaker sections in unaided schools, CABE resolved to constitute a Committee to address the complexities involved in its implementation.

4. Recognising the high demand for skill in the country, CABE emphasised the need for a National Vocational Qualification Framework to provide a common reference framework for linking various vocational qualifications and setting common principles and guidelines for a nationally recognised qualification system and standards. It was resolved to set up an inter-ministerial group which would also include representatives of state Governments to develop guidelines for such a National Framework.

5. CABE endorsed the proposal for implementation a core-curriculum in the subjects of science and mathematics by all higher secondary boards in the country from the

academic session 2011-12. The preparation of core curriculum for commerce was also endorsed.

Source: New Delhi /pib.nic.in/19 June 2010

The power of ideas 2010: Fostering a culture of innovation

The Department of Science & Technology (DST), Government of India is offering guaranteed funds worth Rs 5 crore for the 'Power of Ideas' initiative. The Power of Ideas initiative, being launched on June 22, 2010 is India's largest entrepreneurial platform that encourages, nurtures and grooms business ideas by connecting them with relevant mentors, incubators and investors. This unique public-private-academia partnership means there is real money and real expertise powering The Power of Ideas 2010.

The Power of Ideas was first launched by The Economic Times in 2009, in the middle of a global economic slowdown, to boost sentiment and encourage India Inc to approach the slowdown differently. Over 12,500 business ideas were received and of these, 1,000 short-listed participants were taken through Group Mentoring sessions and Elevator Pitches. A final list of 254 thus arrived at were put through a phase of one-on-one Mentoring prior to presenting their ideas to investors. Till date, nearly 20 ideas have received funding and several more are in advanced stages of talks with investors. This year, the objective is to formalize the initiative, transforming it into an entrepreneurial ecosystem that will drive the economy forward.

Working alongside will be the Centre for Innovation, Incubation and Entrepreneurship (CIIE), Indian Institute of Management (IIM), Ahmedabad. Started as an incubating lab of IIM Ahmedabad, CIIE is today a domain expert, with experience in mentoring, hand-holding and making entrepreneurs investor-ready.

In the last few months, CIIE has been sewing together a system comprising of mentors and investors who will evaluate every single business summary that comes to The Power of Ideas 2010. Just to ensure that more dreamers get to meet investors, CIIE has also worked out a unique ten-day incubation programme at its campus for all candidates who make it to the final cut-off list of The Power of Ideas.

Details of Programme structure include a Discussion Board for like-minded people to come together and exchange ideas (ideas exchange); Learning Center featuring select literature on entrepreneurial subjects issues and a comprehensive Directory featuring contact details of the who's who of the entrepreneurial system; and Essential Toolkit- a single window to access everything one needs to know about basics of starting up – government policies, applying for patents, registering one's company, making an elevator pitch, the ideal business plan, et al.

Source: New Delhi /pib.nic.in/21 June 2010

Contribute

If you are an academician, a researcher, an investigator or a thinker then, Apeejay Stya Education Research Foundation invites you to send your inputs by way of your opinion, information, suggestions and experiences in the field of education.

Researchers are also invited to send in their published documents so that they can be hosted on this site.

Please email your contributions to aserf@apeejay.edu

Apeejay Stya Education Research Foundation (ASERF) is guided by the vision of eminent educationist, industrialist and philanthropist Dr. Stya Paul's vision of value-based holistic education for a responsive and responsible citizenship with a finely ingrained attitude of service-before-self. It is supported by Apeejay Stya Group, a leading Industrial & Investment House of India with interests in diverse fields. It will attempt to shoulder the efforts in serving the broader issues of Access, Quality, Equity & Relevance of Education and gear up to face the challenges of the new world order using collaborative and multidisciplinary approach. The foundation will become the repository of information on education and conduct research in new educational methodologies while collaborating with premier educational institutions globally.

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