Apeejay Stya
Education Research Foundation
Rooted in Values Soaring Towards Excellence

E-Bulletin Number 68 **A Fortnightly News Bulletin from the Apeejay Stya Education Research Foundation**

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Announcements

ASERF has instituted Dr Stya Paul Young Educationist 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 2009. Click here to download the prescribed format along with the terms and conditions.

Apeejay Education Society launches courses in Biosciences & Clinical Research: Apeejay Education Society (AES), has now established an institute for Biosciences and Clinical Research to meet the growing demand for technical personnel in the Biosciences sector. The institute, **Apeejay Svran Institute for Biosciences and Clinical Research, Gurgaon, (AIBCR)** has been established in collaboration with leading companies in the industry, viz Martin & Harris, ASG Biochemicals and Walter & Bushnell Health Care.
For more, visit: www.apeejay.edu/aibcr

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

Right of Children to Free & Compulsory Education Bill, 2009: The Story of a Missed Opportunity

Both the Houses of the Indian Parliament have passed the Bill for providing free and compulsory education for children in the age-group of 6 to 14. There have been extensive debates on the extent to which this Bill will help in implementing the right to education as provided in Article 21-A of the Indian Constitution. What has been ignored in these discussions is that the Bill as adopted misses the excellent opportunity provided to the nation for bringing about a radical transformation of the school education system in India.

While discussing the problems of school education in India, a few issues are repeatedly raised: absence of teachers from schools, lack of interest on the part of the parents or guardians, deficiencies in curriculum and syllabus, wrong methods of teaching etc. But these problems cannot be viewed in isolation and in a fragmented fashion. For, their roots are spread deep in the entire system. Therefore, if one wants to solve these problems, then it would be necessary to transform the entire education system. What are the systemic and fundamental problems of the Indian school education system?

Firstly, there is the problem of access. School education is simply unavailable to the vast number of children in the country. During the last few decades, there has been some progress in improving enrolment. The gross enrolment ratio (GER) from Classes I to VIII was 94.9 per cent and from Classes I to XII, 77 per cent. (Educational Statistics at a Glance, 2005-06, the Ministry of HRD, 2008) The government primarily relies on the GER to bolster its claim for progress made in expanding school education in India. But enrolment is a very unreliable basis for assessing the degree of access to school education. Firstly, enrolment figures are generally rigged and exaggerated for various administrative and political purposes. Moreover, in order to assess the progress in expanding school education, it is important to take into account the figures for attendance and for drop-out from among those who are enrolled. The attendance has generally been found to be at least 25 per cent below enrolment. The drop-out rates are very high indeed. For the country as a whole, the drop-out rate from Classes I to X was 61.6 per cent; and in a State like Bihar it was above 75 per cent. Among those who drop out, the percentage of children belonging to the Scheduled Castes in the country, as a whole was 70.6 and of the Scheduled Tribes, 78.5. In Bihar, the figure was close to 90 per cent for both the categories. The net result is that a sizeable percentage, as much as 30 per cent, of children in the school-going age in India are out of school; the percentage is as high as 50 in Bihar (1.5 crores out of three crore children in the school-going age-group).

Thus a huge number of children are excluded from school education. This is thus a colossal waste of human resources. Besides, educational exclusion is the worst form of exclusion because it means exclusion from other walks of life and areas of activities such as livelihood, knowledge, status in society, human dignity etc. Moreover, educational exclusion becomes cumulative as it is carried over from generation to generation. For, it is seen that educated parents are more inclined to educate their children than those who are uneducated. Besides, exclusion from school education, particularly at the primary level, is a denial of human rights both in accordance with the provision in the Indian Constitution and in accordance with the relevant provision of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The Bill sets no deadline for the universalisation of education from Classes I to VIII. Different deadlines have been given for different purposes, which are not mutually consistent and in the absence of any plan or resources required for achieving them, it is doubtful that they would be adhered to. The most important deadline is in Section 6 of the Bill, which states:

For carrying out the provisions of this Act, appropriate government and local authority shall establish, within such area or limits of neighbourhood as may be prescribed, a school, where it is not so established, within a period of three years from the commencement of this Act.

It is further stated that teachers will acquire the requisite qualification and prescribed training within a period of five years. At another place, it is laid down that the pupil-teacher ratio of 40:1, prescribed in the Bill, will be achieved within six months. Does this mean that all the teachers required, even though they are not qualified, will be recruited within six months? Is it at all feasible? Even if it is so, but if the schools are not there, where will they teach? This provision also implies that the pupil-teacher ratio could be maintained, at least until the next five years, by continuing the practice of appointing para-teachers. The Bill makes no estimate of the additional number of

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schools to be built, additional number of teachers to be recruited and trained, and training institutions to be created and restored. This has all been left to be determined by the appropriate government and local authority. This makes the attainment of the target set in the Bill and of the overall goal of universalisation highly improbable.

The Common School System Commission, Bihar, in its report, estimated that in order to universalise free and compulsory education for children in the age-group of 5 to 14 in five years, universalise education for children from Classes IX to X in eight years and to facilitate transit to Classes XI to XII of 70 per cent of those who will pass Class X in nine years, 25,900 additional primary schools, 15,500 middle schools and 19,100 secondary schools will have to be built. The number of additional teachers to be recruited for achieving the above goals would be 2.55 lakhs at the primary level, 3.24 lakhs at the middle level and 4.29 lakhs at the secondary level. It stands to reason that the very first and most essential requirement to be fulfilled for universalising quality school education, is to build these additional schools, recruit these additional teachers and provide training for them. As already stated, the Bill does not make any attempt even to quantify these requirements.

The second systemic problem of school education in India is its abysmally poor quality. This has been attributed to a variety of factors, including poor curriculum and syllabus, deficient pedagogy, negligent teachers and parents who are unconcerned. But the real reason is the gross under-funding of school education in India. If the required magnitude of funding is available, many of the factors, allegedly accountable for the poor quality of school education, would disappear. For example, it is unfair to blame teachers who are compelled to teach in a school which does not have blackboards, teaching aids, laboratories for experiment and adequate space, and which do not provide facilities or incentives for improving their skills and environment and for pedagogic innovation. Besides, a large number of teachers have no training. They are also obliged to carry out non-educational activities. The members of the Common School System Commission, Bihar, during their visits to schools, did not find any school, which had a properly functioning laboratory. We simply cannot get away from the fact that the quality of school education in India is decisively influenced by the quantity or magnitude of funding.

The most effective and important means of ensuring quality is to establish minimum norms and standards relating to all relevant aspects of school education, and ensure that they are applied uniformally to all schools. No doubt, some norms have been laid down in the Schedule attached to the Right to Free and Compulsory Education Bill. But they are utterly inadequate. There is no mention in the Schedule of a number of some extremely important norms such as—distance of the school from the habitation of the child, sitting area in square metres per child, number of children per school, number of classes per school, furniture in the class and office rooms, teaching aides, computers, equipment in a laboratory, the qualification and training of teachers, scales of their pay, allowances and other conditions of service, including scope for promotion etc. Some norms are mentioned in the Bill only as items, and they are qualified by the phrase “as the government may determine”. This means that these norms will not be justiceable and may never be established. It also implies that the present practice of recruitment of para-teachers and the multi-grade teaching may continue. In the absence of adequate and legally enforceable norms, it is superfluous to talk about quality.

The main reason for a large proportion of the children remaining out of school and the poor quality of education in schools is under-funding of school education. Normally, the Bill should have provided a Financial Memorandum, which should have indicated the exact amount of resources required for giving effect to the Bill. There is indeed a brief Financial Memorandum attached to the Bill. But this can hardly be taken seriously. It states; “It is not possible to quantify the financial requirement on this account at this stage.” This statement is not correct. In the last 10 years or so, additional resources required for providing free and compulsory education to children in different age-groups have been estimated several times in the country.

Two expert groups set up by the Government of India and the Common School System Commission, Bihar laid down norms and standards for providing quality education, put price tags on these norms and standards, and on that basis calculated the additional cost to be incurred for providing free and compulsory education and universalising school education within a time-bound framework. The two Expert Groups set up by the Government of India confined themselves to providing free and compulsory education to children in age-group 6 to 14. The Expert Group under the chairmanship of Professor Tapas Mazumdar, set up by the Government of India in 1999, estimated an additional cost of Rs 13,700 crores per annum over the next 10 years for providing free and compulsory elementary education according to the norms prescribed by it. The Expert Group set up by a Committee of the Consultative Advisory Board on Education (CABE) estimated in 2004 a total additional cost of approximately Rs 73,000 crores per annum

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over the next six years for achieving the same goal. The Bihar Commission report, which covered the entire school education from one year of pre-primary to Class XII, estimated an additional expenditure of Rs 9950 crores per annum over nine years. The non-implementation of the recommendation of the Expert Group led by Professor Tapas Mazumdar resulted in a cumulative gap reflected in a manifold increase in the additional expenditure calculated in 2004, to be incurred for achieving broadly the same purpose. If the recommendation of the second Expert Group also remains un-implemented, as has been the case until now, then the cumulative gap will grow further and, say, in 10 years from now, we would need an astronomically large sum of resources for universalising elementary education. Perhaps at that time the government in power will raise its hands in despair and drop the whole idea of universalisation, and India will continue to stagnate for years to come at a low level of school education, both quantitatively as well as qualitatively, to the detriment of its unity and future development.

Perhaps the assumption in the Bill regarding resources is that those available for the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) in the 11th Plan would suffice to meet the resources required. But the fact is that in spite of these resources having been nearly doubled in the 11th Plan as compared to the 10th Plan, they are at the level of about Rs 30,000 crores per annum, which is less than half of Rs 73,000 crores per annum of additional resources required, according to the Expert Group of the CABE Committee (2004). Even under an assumption of higher pupil-teacher ratio, the additional resources required per annum, calculated by this Expert Group, is Rs 53,500 crores per annum, which is much higher than Rs 30,000 crores.

India's National Education Policy lays down the goal of setting aside at least six per cent of the GDP for expenditure on education. This target, originally recommended by the Kothari Commission, has also found place in the manifestos of almost all major political parties. But the maximum share of the GDP devoted to education in India has been close to four per cent and on most occasions it has been around three per cent. The Minister for Human Resource Development has recently conceded that the resources gap is huge, particularly when we consider the fact that in many advanced and several more developed among developing countries, the expenditure on education is 10 per cent or above of the GDP. He has expressed the view that only the private sector can fill in the gap. He has, therefore, made a plea for public-private partnership in education.

Though private-public partnership in education has been talked about for the last few years, the progress in this direction has been negligible. Even otherwise, the record of the private sector in meeting the demand for school education is not at all impressive. As many as 89.1 per cent of the primary schools in India were in the public sector (government and local body) and only 10 per cent in the private sector. (Educational Statistics at a Glance 2005-06, Ministry of HRD, 2008) For upper primary schools, the percentage was 72 to 78 respectively. (Source: the same HRD data) The enrolment from Classes I to VII/VIII was 72.23 percent in government schools and only 27.61 percent in private schools. (DISE Data: NUEPA, 2007-08) In the case of Bihar, the contribution of the private sector to school education at the elementary level, in terms of number of schools as well as percentage of enrolment, is below six per cent.

If after 60 years of independence, the private schools have filled in a gap of only a little over 10 per cent, so far as the total number of primary schools are concerned, there can be no assurance that they will be able to contribute significantly to providing free and compulsory education to children in the age-group 6-14 and to universalising secondary education. At the current rate of their contribution, and if the state does not step in to cover the gap, we may have to wait till the end of the century for universalising school education in India and even then it may not come about. It may take even longer to universalise secondary education, because the number of additional schools to be constructed and additional teachers to be recruited at this level, is colossal. Besides, school education is a social good the provision of which is the responsibility of the state. The provision of free and compulsory education is now a fundamental right available to children in the 6-14 age-group. It is incumbent upon the state to ensure this right with immediate effect. It is legally and morally untenable for it to make the fulfilment of this right conditional upon the contribution of the private sector.

The third systemic problem of education in India is the rampant discrimination characterising it. Children of the rich and the elite have access to good quality private and special types of public schools, whereas children of the vast majority of the poor, including the minorities and marginalised groups, go to government schools which are in a shambles. Thus, the class division in the society is reflected in the division of the school system. The latter has been a major contributory factor to the perpetuation and accentuation of social inequality. It also makes for bad education. For, empirical studies have demonstrated that schools, which bring in children from different communities and classes, provide better education

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and even the children of the rich and the elite stand to benefit from such a school system.

The Right to Education Bill perpetuates the multi-layer discriminating school system in India. It legalises the currently operating four categories of schools in India (a) government schools, (b) aided private schools, (c) special category schools and (d) non-aided private schools. According to the Bill, the government schools will provide compulsory and free education to all children in the age-group of 6-14 years admitted therein, and the aided private schools will provide such education in such proportion of children admitted therein as its annual recurring aid or grant bears to its recurring annual expenses, subject to a minimum of 25 per cent. The special category schools and non-aided private schools shall admit in Class I, to the extent of at least 25 per cent of the strength of that class, children belonging to the weaker sections or disadvantaged groups in the neighbourhood and provide free and compulsory elementary education till its completion. These last two categories of schools will be reimbursed expenditure so incurred by them to the extent of per child expenditure incurred by the state, or the actual amount charged from the child, whichever is less.

These provisions, as already stated, perpetuate the present multi-layer system of schools. In addition, they are in violation of Article 21A which calls for the provision of free and compulsory education to all children in the 6 to 14 age-group. As many as 75 per cent of the children in this age-group in aided private schools will not be provided free and compulsory education. In the last two categories of schools, children in the age-group admitted therein, not belonging to disadvantaged or weaker groups, will not be provided free and compulsory education and for these groups also, only 25 per cent of the children will be provided free and compulsory education in these schools. This also is a violation of Article 21A.

There are two ways in which the government could have significantly mitigated, if not eliminated, the discrimination characterising the Indian school education system. The first was by establishing exhaustive and justiceable norms and standards and applying them rigorously to all schools, both public and private, and second, by embracing and enforcing the concept of neighbourhood schools whereby the state would delineate the neighbourbood for each school which would be required by law to admit and educate till completion, all the children residing in the neighbourhood. In India, we have advocates of freedom of choice and freedom of profession who argue that the concept of neighbourhood school militates against the exercise of these freedoms. They forget that this concept has been applied for decades, if not centuries, in countries where democracy has taken firmer roots and where freedom is valued much more than in our country. I shall illustrate this by a personal example. When I was posted to New York in the early 1970s, I had to send my two children to a public school there. Since I stayed on 89th Street and 1st Avenue in New York, I was told that my children could go only to the nearest public school which was on 96th Street and 2nd Avenue. This location is on the fringe of Harlem which was known for its high incidence of crime and drug addiction. But I had no choice but to send my children to this school. This was according to the law of the city and nobody complained that it was in violation of his/her fundamental rights. Apparently, individual rights cannot take precedence over the public purpose enshrined in the Constitution, of ensuring social equality. There is no reference to the concept of neighbourhood school in the Right to Education Bill except that there is a provision for making reservation of 25 per cent of the seats for children of weaker and disadvantaged groups coming from the neighbourhood. This is a far cry from the concept of neighbourhood schools as practised in most developed countries and a number of developing countries which have a common school system.

Another systemic malady, which has afflicted school education in India, is the transformation of the very nature and meaning of school education, brought about by the forces of globalisation and liberalisation in which international agencies have played no small a role. In most developing countries including India, education has to a large extent been replaced by literacy for which it is strictly not necessary to go to schools. According to the new paradigm, education is defined in functional terms, that is, making the recipient qualified for the marketplace. In this sense the educational system as a whole has been commodified. Today, the purpose of school education is merely imparting skills of literacy and numeracy. The basic philosophical purpose of education is to enhance the capacity of the children to comprehend, to discern, to contest what, according to them, is wrong, and to develop the urge to transform what is wrong and unjust. These philosophical goals have been set aside and replaced by the functional goal of meeting the demand of the market. Under the globalisation/liberalisation paradigm, schools have to a large extent been replaced by literacy and informal centres, trained teachers have been replaced by para-teachers, and the system of at least one teacher for every class and for every important subject has been replaced by multi-grade teaching. Training is no longer regarded as essential for teaching. The Government of Bihar officially notified in 1991 that training was no longer necessary as a qualification for appointment as

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a teacher. This whole process of distortion of the meaning and purpose of education started systematically since the mid-1980s and has by now been completed.

This transformation of the nature of education has seriously affected its quality and has relegated to the background the concept of schooling as a means of socialisation, nation-building and formation of social capital, which has been practised for centuries by important developed countries. It has also been used to rationalise non-universalisation of school education and its under-funding. The Right to Education Bill does not make any provision for reversing the process of the distortion of the meaning and purpose of education.

The Right to Education Bill should have covered the entire school education system including one or two years of pre-primary education, elementary education (that is, the 6 to 14 age-group which is its present coverage) and secondary education. The distinction between pre-primary, elementary and secondary education may be valid from the pedagogic point of view, but this distinction becomes arbitrary when it comes to guaranteeing right of education, universalising school education, and ensuring its quality. There are strong reasons for providing free and compulsory education preferably for two years and at least for one year at the pre-primary level, and also for universalising secondary education. A Group of Experts which met at UNESCO Headquarters at the end of 2007, of which I happened to be a member, arrived at the consensus that "basic education should consist of at least nine years after pre-primary and ideally it should extend to 12 years". In most of the advanced developing countries, like China, Mexico, South Africa, Brazil, Thailand, Indonesia etc., the task of universalising elementary education was accomplished a long time ago and the current pre-occupation of the educational planners and policy-makers is for universalising quality secondary education.

Depriving the children in the age-group, say, 4 to 6, of free and compulsory education, as the Right to Education Bill does, is totally arbitrary and a flagrant denial of human rights. Article 45 of the Indian Constitution directed the state to provide free and compulsory education up to the age of 14, which included children at the pre-primary level of education. The famous Unnikrishnan judgement, which regarded right to education as a part of right to life, also covered children up to the age of 14.

However, when the 86th Amendment to the Indian Constitution was enacted in the form of Article 21-A, the government arbitrarily—almost by a sleight of hand—excluded children in the age-group of 0 to 6 from the ambit of the amendment. Thus, some 170 million children were deprived of the right to free and compulsory education. However, this right still exists because the amended version of Article 45 states:

The State shall endeavour to provide early childhood care and education for all children until they complete the age of 6 years.

If this is read with Article 21, as was done in the Unnikrishnan judgment, then the children in age group of 0-6 also enjoy the fundamental right to free and compulsory education.

The Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) is the only programme which provides for education to children in the age-group of 0 to 6, but access to services under the ICDS is neither universal nor a legal right. The ICDS covers only 42 per cent of the children in the relevant age-group. Besides, it is not a right but a development service voluntarily offered by the state. Evidence shows that a good percentage of the children covered by the ICDS are not enrolled under it. Besides, the delivery of prescribed service to those who are enrolled is irregular and inadequate. The education component of the ICDS is the most neglected service. It is either not delivered at all or only partially delivered. A Social Audit of the functioning of the ICDS in the district of Anantapur in Andhra Pradesh, recently carried out by the Council for Social Development, bears out these facts. The foundations of our educational system will remain weak until quality pre-primary education is provided to children in the age-group of 4 to 6. This will continue to severely hamper our effort to develop human resources in the country.

The Bill should have provided for the universalisation of secondary education also, that is, for children in the age-group of 15-18. The definition of a child, according to the UN Convention on Child Rights, includes children up to the age of 18. India is a party to this Convention. Moreover, the universalisation of education at this level is also a logical consequence of universalising education up to Class VIII because if secondary education is not universalised, then the children who complete Class VIII would have nowhere to go except dropping out. For, according to regulations in force in the country, a child has to pass Class XII for getting entry into any academic institution of higher or technical education which can qualify it for entering the job market.

It was in view of these considerations that in the Report of the Common School System Commission, Bihar, a single legislation was recommended covering school education from one year at the pre-primary level to Class XII. The Report also prescribed separate

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norms and standards for the three levels of school education, that is, pre-primary, elementary and secondary. Though most of the norms are common to these three levels, there are also significant differences. The Right to Education Bill, therefore, should have covered the entire school education system, universalising education from pre-primary to higher secondary level, providing free education from pre-primary to at least Class VIII, if not Classes IX and X, and applying norms for ensuring quality and equity to all schools at all the three levels of school education.

The Right to Education Bill should have also included a language policy which would have provided the best opportunity for the flowering of the talents of the children and which, at the same time, would have been a major factor for uniting the country. Unfortunately, the government missed this opportunity also. The legislation has no language policy. It only states in one of the clauses that “medium of instruction shall, as for as practicable, be in child’s mother tongue”. The inclusion of the phrase “as far as practicable” will give a carte blanche to private schools even at the elementary level, to continue their present practice of giving instructions through the medium of English. Moreover, the term “mother tongue” is not defined. For example, for a child coming from the Maithili speaking region, will the mother tongue be Maithili or Hindi?

The enactment of the legislation also provided an excellent opportunity to make a beginning with the implementation of the three-language formula, recommended by the Kothari Commission and included in the National Education Policy. But this opportunity has also been squandered. The language policy laid down in Annex-II to the legislation recommended by the Common School System Commission, Bihar, demonstrates that the implementation of the three-language formula is feasible, if there is a political will to do so.

Finally, the Bill should have created a mechanism vested with the overall responsibility of overseeing progress in the restructuring of school education, bringing about improvements, through research and public discussion, in the norms and standards included in the Bill, adjudicating disputes where called upon to do so, and being the Court of Last Appeal so far as the implementation of the Act is concerned. This should have been possible only by establishing a fully empowered judicial or quasi-judicial Commission. The government seems to be very keen to set up such a Commission for higher education, which is perhaps needed and for which there is considerable public support. However, such a Commission is needed equally, if not more importantly, for school education. In lieu of this, the Bill provides for the establishment of a Central as well as State Advisory Councils. This is hardly likely to serve the purpose. Such Advisory Councils are vested with very limited power. Their membership is in the nature of patronage or favour bestowed by political leaders, and in most cases, their advice is seldom sought or sought only as a public relations and politically motivated exercise.

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NEWS

8 million Indian children not enrolled in schools

Some eight million children in India between the ages of 6 and 14 are not enrolled in schools.

According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), there are nearly 165 million child labourers in India.

They mostly work as rag pickers and earn about half a dollar a day. They come from large families who are too poor to send them to school.

Education is a distant dream that they share with nearly 40 per cent of India's illiterate population.

"Child labour issue is very serious in India. Even on the streets of Delhi or on the crossings of Delhi, you find children either selling books or magazines, or simply begging. The government's response to this has been very poor and concern is growing as to what will be done for child labour, or for those children who (can't)... go to school," said JS Rajput, an education expert.

While the government has now made education a right of all children till the age of 14, getting the kids to school is a tough task.

But there are some innovative ideas.

Chhatisgarh state has come up with a scheme called "Adopt A Girl" which is helping to boost the female literacy rate.

Under the scheme, girls living in slums are given free textbooks, stationery and a school bag. They also get mentors who personally ensure that the girls stay in school.

"If common people fund the education of a single child, it's no more than US$6 a year. Since we started the 'Adopt A Girl' scheme, the education of 20,000 girls has been funded," said Brijmohan Agarwal, Education Minister for Chhatisgarh state.

Other organisations are hoping to attract children to attend school by changing the syllabus. While subjects like history and physics may not make sense to tribal

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children of Orissa, learning about weaving, sculpting and tailoring do.

The schools are run especially for dropouts, where they are taught vocational skills along with subjects like English and Maths.

"Three years ago, I dropped out after Class 5. But when this school opened, many girls like me returned. I am glad to be back. The studies here are not boring and we get to learn a lot of things," said Sushima Shisa, a student.

But a lot more still needs to be done to restructure the country's education system.

Many children in India have to walk miles to reach a school.

Sometimes there are not enough teachers, and schools are just dilapidated shacks.

Analysts said that without addressing these issues, the right to education cannot be implemented effectively in the country.

India spends less on education than countries such as China, Vietnam and Cuba. Clearly, by just spending 4 percent of its GDP, India cannot hope to achieve the goal of universal primary education.

Source: /channelnewsasia.com/21 September 2009

Bird's eye view of Executive education in the country

To gain an edge in a world where rapid globalisation, changing consumer attitudes, closely integrated markets are commonly bandied phrases, today's managers have to keep learning continuously, not only from their jobs but also through formal pedagogy. This is where the role of executive management programmes steps in.

Several new institutes and organisations cater to the rising demand of training of executives, as opposed to predominantly fresh graduates that enroll into B-schools. And, the enrolment numbers at executive education programmes is only going higher by the day. Take for example NIIT Imperia, which was set up in the year 2006 to address the demand for executive training.

Now, has a presence in eight cities; and it has aggressive plans to be present in 75 cities by 2010! Other than the big players like IIMs and ISB, many other organisations and institutes like HughesNet Global Education, Apeejay School of Management, IGNOU, Reliance Webworld, NIS Sparta, 24 x 7 Learning and U21 Global are growing rapidly too, and are offering various executive education programmes.

Before we go any further, it is important to define executive education. Executive education is the term used for programmes at graduate-level business schools that aim to give classes for chief executives and other top managers or entrepreneurs. Executive education developed in the 1980s and 1990s, as the increasing pace and scope of global business demanded higher levels of education among employees.

Top management institutes like IIMs, ISB, XLRI and MDI, recognising this need, launched several long-term executive education courses. For instance, IIM A offers Post Graduate Programme in Management for Executives (PGPX), IIMC offers Post Graduate Programme for Executives (PGPEX), IIMI offers Executive PG Programme in Management.

While the executive education programmes vary from institute to institute, the favourite choices include, says Deepak Chandra, Assistant Dean, Centre for Executive Education, Indian School of Business, "Strategy and leadership programmes are the all-time favourites. However, since requirements are specific to each company/industry segment, courses in mergers and acquisitions, marketing strategy, etc., also are high in demand." The most interesting fact about executive education programmes is that these courses can be tailor-made.

"Corporate executive management as well as training programme can be made as per specific need of any industry. And, thus it makes sense for us to customise the courses as per the specific needs of a company. We have had training programmes for a number of organisations like ONGC, NTPC, IOC, GAIL India, Power Grid Corporation etc," informs Dr Ravikesh Srivastava, Professor and Program Director, FORE School of Management.

The tailor-made courses include pedagogical tools that are matched to the needs of individual programmes and emphasise active participation rather than passive assimilation. The three-year part time PGDM programme offered by FORE is approved by the All India Council for Technical Education, Ministry of Human Resources, Government of India. The three-year part-time programme is designed to impart knowledge and skill in the basic and functional areas of management.

Dr Chandra informs, "While MBA is a more general programme, and executive education is geared towards making managers transform into business leaders. Quality executive education focuses on the challenges of leadership and provides perspectives on emerging as a leader." "Executive education is very different from MBA. Elaborates a professor from Apeejay Institute of Technology, The two are different in their approach, content and expected results.

As an executive moves up the organisational hierarchy, two things happen: one, he acquires some

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experience and know-how of the work place; and two, he develops specific skill and knowledge to do his job better. Executive education fills this gap. The seriousness with which Indian companies are taking executive education can be measured by the demand for customised programmes and partnerships with B-schools in co-designing curriculum."

IIMA is another business school of international repute that is committed not only to provide quality management education, but also focuses on producing quality research papers. In this decade, IIM, Ahmedabad is focusing on exchange of faculty with international business schools, admitting full time international schools, expansion of the campus to accommodate the institutes' international executive development programmes.

IIM, Ahmedabad's PGPX is a coveted programme. The objective of the programme is to develop bright, enthusiastic, and aspirational executives into management leaders and change agents on the global platform. The programme has now begun to gain high levels of acceptance amongst corporates in India and abroad.

Executive education programmes can be classified on the basis of duration and delivery mode. The mode of delivery can be on-campus, online or a combination of both modes. Also, the duration of executive education programmes can vary from just a few days to one and even two years. Besides, executive education programmes can be broadly classified into two categories—general management and functional management.

While there is open enrollment for general management courses, the functional management courses are mostly tailor-made and are industry or company specific in nature. With each business seeking to grow and expand, the need of custom or tailor-made courses has multiplied manifold.

In a scenario, when there is a neck-to-neck competition, the role of executive education is becoming too imperative!

Source: /economictimes/24 September 2009

BITS Pilani Spearheading Industry University Collaborations in India

Effective Work Integrated Learning partnerships apart from delivering personal and career benefits to the individual student, also contributes to learning and teaching excellence by developing skills that make students more attractive to employers.

The Birla Institute of Technology and Science - BITS Pilani for the year 2009 has been ranked among the top ranking universities along with IITs in various Magazine surveys such as India Today, Outlook, LiveMint etc. BITS offers degrees in various disciplines presently at Pilani, Dubai, Goa and Hyderabad campuses and recently the NAAC - National Assessment and Accreditation Council reaccredited BITS with 3.71 CGPA out of 4 and awarded “A” grade “Very Good” status.

BITS Pilani since 1973 has made a pioneering contribution for the development of institutionalized linkages between university and industry by launching Practice School which takes all its students to the industry for seven and half months as an integral component of the academic curriculum like the medical internship. The early start evidently helped, for the Institute today, has tie-ups with a large number of companies across the country. Organizations interested in hosting Practice School for students of BITS may contact Dr G Sundar Dean for Practice School Program at BITS Pilani Rajasthan 333031 India. Email gisundar@gmail.com Website http://www.bits-pilani.ac.in:12355/

Since 1979, BITS Pilani has been participating in the HRD activities of the industries through several degree programmes by integrating the working environment of the employees with the learning environment required by the Institute. The enrollment for the work integrated learning programmes has grown from 30 students in 1979 to over 19,000 students in 2008.

Considering that present day information technologies can allow a rich interactive learning experience that may surpass the interactivity of a traditional classroom, the BITS model of work-integrated learning emphasizes on acquisition of knowledge and skills through mediated information and deploys synchronous instruction through Internet based desktop video conferencing as well as asynchronous instruction through on-demand lectures. While conventional Distance Learning does not insist on being employed as a requirement, Work Integrated Learning - WIL requires the same mandatorily.

For the work Integrated Learning Programmes, in the IT area BITS has tie up with Wipro, CTS, HP, Persistent, Patni, TechMahindra, SAP, Yahoo!, Sabre Travel etc. Wipro had showcased the WASE program conducted in collaboration with BITS Pilani for the Corporate University Xchange (CUX) USA awards and bagged the Best Practice Award for Corporate College partnership for the year 2007.

In the Engineering area BITS has tie up with Bharat Forge, Technip, Ashok Leyland, L&T etc. In the Power sector BITS has tieup with NTPC, NDPL (Tata Power), Essar Power, Renusagar Power, Tehri Hydro etc. In the Process area, BITS had tieup with Chambal

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Fertilizers, Tata Chemicals, Hindustan Zinc (HZL), Hindalco etc.

In the Pharma sector BITS has tieup with Dr Reddy's Labs, Matrix Labs, Strides Arco Labs and Dabur Pharma (Fresenius Kabi Oncology Ltd.). In the healthcare sector BITS has tieup with CMC Hospital Vellore and Bombay Hospital Mumbai / Indore.

BITS Pilani has collaborated with and also presently collaborating with various CSIR Labs (CLRI Chennai, IICB Kolkata NPL Delhi etc), Consultancy Development Centre (CDC) New Delhi under GOI Ministry of Science and Technology, National Council of Science Museums (NCSM) Kolkata under GOI Ministry of Culture, Indian Institute of Quality Management (IIQM) Jaipur under GOI Ministry of Communication and IT, Bharat Dynamics under GOI Ministry of Defence, Atomic Energy Education Society under GOI Department of Atomic Energy, Indian Railways RDSO Lucknow, IRCAMTECH Gwalior etc.

Organizations, which may be interested in Work Integrated Learning Programmes of BITS, may contact Dr BR Natarajan Dean WILP Division BITS Pilani Rajasthan 333031 India. Email: brnatarajanbits@gmail.com Website http://www.bits-pilani.ac.in/dlp-home/

Work integrated learning and e-Learning at BITS Pilani are not just treated as philosophies and technologies but also as pedagogical drivers.

Source: /prlog.org/23 September 2009

Colleges crave for `autonomy'

With plans to dissolve the central affiliating and approving authorities including UGC & AICTE on the anvil, the owners of several educational institutions in the state are now seeking autonomy.

Fearing that the recognition and approval norms will be stringent from the coming academic year with new monitoring bodies in place, various college managements have decided to take an easy way out by getting an autonomous status.

Over 35 institutes from the state have applied for autonomy so far. These applications are over and above the 20 applications for autonomy already pending with the UGC.

"Once the new set of governing and approving bodies comes into place, the rules for renewal of approval will also change. There will be new plans by the officials and it will be stricter than the current ones. Once autonomy is given, the governance of the institute will be in the management's hands. There will be less of a tussle to get things done," said a representative of a college management, which has applied for autonomous status.

Prominent managements including St Mary's group of colleges and technical institutions like CBIT and MGIT are some of the front-runners for the status. The beeline for autonomy is also because of the other benefits that colleges can accrue. "Once autonomous, the college can decide their own fee, they can decide on which faculty to appoint and take up all the managerial work on their own, which otherwise needs approval. It will be easier to run the institute," another management representative said.

The eagerness to get approval is, not read however, in such plain terms by officials from the higher education department. "There will be less of government monitoring on the institutes. So even if a management does not offer a good quality education it will be able to demand more fees," a senior official from the higher education department said. The officials of the erstwhile affiliating bodies including, Jawaharlal Nehru Technical University (JNTU), Hyderabad, are also not happy with the current rush.

"Many institutions who want to get autonomous status do not fulfill the requirements needed to be given that status. Many of them might not even fulfill the conditions for a university affiliation and hence there are so many pending cases," JNTU, vice chancellor, D N Reddy said. He said that many institutions might not get the UGC approval for the coming academic year as the requirements for autonomy are fairly difficult to attain.

Source: Hyderabad /timesofindia/23 September 2009

Cost of right to education: Rs 1.78 lakh crore

After the euphoria comes the real test. The cost of implementing the historic Right to Education Act over the next five years by Centre and states works out to a whopping Rs 1.78 lakh crore.

The new law will come into force from the next academic year and since right to education is now a fundamental right, it is mandatory on the part of the government to provide what is demanded.

HRD ministry sources say the total demand of Rs 1.78 lakh crore when fine-tuned will only work out roughly to just one-third of the staggering amount. They said that nearly Rs 50,000 crore can be provided to the kitty by the Centre and states from the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan fund. This brings the demand down to Rs 1.28 lakh crore. The ministry expects that in the 12th Plan nearly Rs 60,000 crore will be allocated to SSA. But this will still leave the effective demand to Rs 68,000 crore. Then again, Centre will have the tough task of

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persuading the states to step forward to share the cost of fulfilling the commitment.

On Friday, HRD ministry sent the proposal to the finance ministry and a copy to the 13th Finance Commission for early perusal. But sources expect a long winter of discussion and negotiation with states, finance ministry and Planning Commission before it can be finalised. The focus of discussion will be the funding pattern of RTE. Currently, SSA is funded by the Centre and states in the ratio of 60:40. It will be 50:50 by the 12th Plan.

In case of RTE, chief ministers are already gearing up to do a collective bargaining. Madhya Pradesh chief minister Shivraj Singh Chauhan has written to PM Manmohan Singh demanding that the funding pattern for RTE should be 90:10 between Centre and states. He has circulated the letter to other CMs as well. Earlier, Orissa CM Naveen Patnaik had demanded a 75:25 funding pattern for RTE between Centre and states. Bihar has also said it cannot bear the extra burden since it is already shelling out 25% of its annual budget on education.

The demand for additional Rs 68,000 crore will go towards improving the infrastructure in schools, student-teacher ratio and in hiring more teachers. While SSA has a student-teacher ratio of 40:1, RTE stipulates a ratio of 30:1. The RTE law stipulates that from class one to class five, if a school has 60 children there should be two teachers, for 61 to 90 children there should be three teachers, and for 91 to 120 children there should be four teachers. There are similar stipulations in case of buildings, working days, play material, games and sports equipment.

Source: The Times of India, 29 Sep 2009

Deemed varsities can no more call themselves universities?

The UGC on Thursday directed 130 deemed-to-be-universities not to call themselves as universities.

Acting on the instruction of the government, the University Grants Commission issued a directive to the vice chancellors and directors of the deemed-to-be-universities not to use the word university with their names.

- The deemed universities were allowed to remove 'deemed' from their name and identify themselves as universities three years ago. The UGC had given them permission in 2006 in this regard following a recommendation by a committee comprising heads of UGC and All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE) and a former Secretary of Higher Education.
- However, the UGC decision has been challenged in the Delhi High Court. The petitioner claimed that the notification has created confusion with no visible difference in a university set up under an Act of Parliament or state legislature and deemed university set up under the University Grants Commission Act, 1956.

The HRD Ministry last month asked the UGC withdraw its notification of 2006.

"You are therefore advised not to use the word university with the name of the deemed university," the today's notification said.

Source: New Delhi /zeenews.com/24 September 2009

Fifty foreign universities may want in

The interested universities, mostly from the US, the UK and Australia, have approached the ministry of human resource development over the last three months

New Delhi: Even as the Indian government prepares to allow entry of foreign education providers in the higher education sector, about 50 foreign universities, including US-based Duke University, have evinced interest in setting up campuses in India.

The interested universities, mostly from the US, the UK and Australia, have approached the ministry of human resource development, which oversees education, over the last three months; a senior official said requesting anonymity.

The Foreign Education Providers Bill, a proposed legislation to allow entry of foreign universities in India, is yet to be approved by Parliament. The proposed Bill has been holding fire after being cleared by the Union Cabinet in February 2007.

To take forward the process of engaging their institutions in education sector in India, a number of foreign dignitaries, including British trade and investment minister Mervyn Davies and Washington Secretary of State Sam Reed, have visited India.

Foreign universities are currently not allowed to offer degree courses in India, although the country allows 100% foreign investment in the sector. However, nearly 150 foreign institutes offer courses with Indian varsities under a twinning arrangement—part of the course in India, the remaining abroad—that is allowed by the education department.

Earlier in June this year, a panel set up by the government to draw up a reform road map for the higher education sector earlier this year recommended that only the top 200 foreign universities be allowed to enter the country. The Yash Pal committee's report, submitted on 24 June, comes as the government

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prepares to table in Parliament the Foreign Education Providers Bill, which will seek to regulate the entry of foreign education providers into the country.

The report, Renovation and Rejuvenation of Higher Education in India, reviewed by Mint, suggests that only the best foreign universities be allowed to function in the higher education sector to avoid fly-by-night operators. The report also calls for a strict regulatory framework to bring such universities on par with Indian universities.

Source: /universityworldnews.com/19 September 2009

Foreign degree won't do to be a doc in India

You may have graduated from premier medical schools like Harvard or Johns Hopkins but you will not be able to practise in India till you have cleared a screening test conducted by the Medical Council of India, the Supreme Court has ruled.

The screening test will also be mandatory for those students who have got MBBS degrees from a country with which India has a reciprocity agreement. Under this rule, foreign nationals with medical degrees from their countries could practise in India without appearing in the screening test and Indians with MBBS degree from home could go there and treat patients.

But the new SC ruling has changed the ground rules. From now, if an Indian student gets a medical degree from a foreign country covered under the reciprocity clause and wants to practise in India, he can do so only after clearing the MCI's screening test.

At present, certain medical qualifications of UK, Australia, Canada, Italy, Japan, New Zealand, South Africa, Ireland, Nepal, Pakistan and Bangladesh are covered under the reciprocity clause.

The worst affected would be Indian students who had made a beeline for medical degrees from colleges in Nepal after the MCI had refused to recognise medical degrees from institutes in erstwhile USSR countries, which had liberal admission criteria.

Students went in droves to get admission in medical colleges in Nepal, with which India has a reciprocity clause, and had approached the SC after MCI said they were required to appear in the screening test.

Dismissing their plea against the screening test, a Bench comprising Chief Justice K G Balakrishnan and Justices P Sathasivam and J M Panchal said, "Appellants have to appear in the screening test conducted by the National Board of Examination in terms of the Screening Test Regulations made by the MCI."

Accepting the argument of senior advocate Maninder Singh, who appeared on behalf of MCI, the Bench clarified that the screening test was mandatory for all Indian students who wanted to practise in India after obtaining MBBS degrees from foreign universities.

"A person who is a citizen of India and obtains a medical qualification granted by any medical institution in any country outside India, recognised for enrolment as medical practitioner in that country, shall not be entitled to be enrolled on the medical register maintained by a state medical council or to have his name entered in the Indian medical register after March 15, 2002, unless he qualifies the screening test prescribed," said Justice Panchal, writing the judgment for the Bench.

The screening test applicability from March 15, 2002, was envisaged keeping in mind the fact that a large number of private agencies started sponsoring students for medical studies in institutions outside India for commercial considerations.

"It was noticed that such students also included those who did not fulfill the minimum eligibility requirements for admission to medical courses in India. Serious aberrations were noticed in the standards of medical education in some foreign countries, which were not on par with standards of medical education available in India," the SC said justifying its ruling.

It was therefore felt necessary by Parliament to make a provision to enable MCI to conduct a screening test to satisfy the regulatory body about the adequacy of knowledge and skills acquired by citizens of India, who obtained medical qualifications from universities or medical institutions outside India.

Source: New Delhi /timesofindia/22 September 2009

Funding higher education

It is heartening to note that the Ministry of Human Resource Development has circulated a note for the establishment of a National Higher Education Finance Corporation (NHEFC) with a planned share capital of Rs 10,000 crore. This is a visionary step in the right direction. The government has pledged to raise public spending on education to 6 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). To accelerate public expenditure, the Union Budget 2004 introduced a cess of 2 per cent on major Central taxes/duties for elementary education, and Budget 2007 a cess of 1 per cent for secondary and higher education.

In the Eleventh Plan, the Centre envisages an outlay of about Rs 2.70 lakh crore for education, which is 19.4 per cent of the total Plan spending. Around 50 per cent of Eleventh Plan outlay is for elementary education and literacy, 20 per cent for secondary education, and 30 per cent for higher education

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(including technical education). Even at such investment levels, Unesco puts India among the lowest spenders on education per student in the world.

The policy document envisages setting up 16 new central universities, with five engineering and medical colleges as part of them, 14 world-class central universities, including five medical and engineering colleges, besides other incentives and support. In the technical education front, the Eleventh Plan provides outlay for eight new IITs, 20 new NITs, 20 new IIITs, 7 new IIMs, and three new IISERs, besides other research and post-graduate fellowships.

Financing the expansion

The National Knowledge Commission (NKC) has recommended the creation of 1,500 universities in India by 2015 to support the growth of potential high-school pass-outs. The NKC has also made various recommendations in engineering, management, medical and vocational education, which also call for additional finance.

Private participants offer more than 70 per cent of higher education. With the Human Resource Development Ministry's plan of easing regulatory mechanisms, based on the Prof Yash Pal Committee recommendations, there will be a tremendous increase in the number of private educational institutions in various streams of education. This means that the requirement of funds for expansion of higher education will be around Rs 60,000 crore in 2009-10, going up to Rs 1,55,000 crore in 2016-17.

It is clear that the higher education system in India will see tremendous growth in both the public and private sectors and, hence, considerable pressures on allocation of finance. The NHEFC would be the ideal agency to arbitrate in the distribution of finance. In 1994, the Dr D. Swaminathan Committee looked into possibilities of resource mobilisation in technical education and recommended the establishment of an Educational Development Bank of India (EDBI) with an initial capital of Rs 3,000 crore. The Committee also said that "if and when educational cess is collected the proceeds should be fed into the EDBI, augmenting the resource availability."

NHEFC to be inclusive

The educational cess was introduced in the Union Budget of 2005-06 and, till January 2009, the Government had collected Rs 23,889.83 crore. The cess collection is estimated to exceed Rs 30,000 crore at the end of this fiscal.

Had the Swaminathan Committee recommendations been implemented and this cess fed back to an EDBI, much of today's financial crunch in the higher education sector could have been solved and definitely would have changed the face of Indian higher education. But better late than never. Union HRD Minister, Mr. Kapil Sibal must ensure that the Swaminathan Committee recommendation, in its new avatar as NHEFC, is implemented. Institutions, both private and public, and students should have access to funds from NHEFC. The allocation of funds must be based on merit. Only such measures will fuel the growth of the higher education system and make it world-class.

Source: /thehindubusinessline.com/30 September 2009

HRD Ministry abolishes lecturer posts in IITs

The Ministry of Human Resource Development (HRD) has abolished the post of Lecturers in the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) and has also revised their pay structures.

A fresh notification by the Ministry on the pay structures says that the post of lecturer-cum-post-doctoral fellows will be redesigned as Assistant Professors and they will be appointed on a contract basis.

The HRD Ministry said that, "Assistant Professors at IITs, IISc (Bangalore), Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs), NITIE (Mumbai) and IISERs, on completion of 3 years of service, shall move to Pay Band of Rs 37400-67000 (PB 4) with an Academic Grade Pay (AGP) of Rs 9000 and will, however continue to be designated as Assistant Professors".

The Ministry's notification also added that the age of superannuation of Librarians, the cadre of Physical Education Personnel of Centrally Funded Technical Institutions (CFTIs); and Registrar and Finance Officer of IITs, IISERs, NITs, IISc (Bangalore) and Deemed-to-be-Universities, will be on par with the University Grants Commission (UGC), and hence be fixed at 62 years, subject to their possessing the qualifications and experience as prescribed by UGC from time to time.

The experience prescribed for the post of Professors - 'a minimum of 10 years' experience' has been re-termed as 'a minimum of 10 years' experience of which at least 4 years should be at the level of Associate Professor in IITs, IISc Bangalore, IIMs, NITIE Mumbai and IISERs.

Source: New Delhi /indiaedunews.net/18 September 2009

HRD sets up panel to suggest ways for revamping school education

In a clear move to promote public-private partnership in school education, HRD ministry has set up a

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roundtable consisting of educationists and representatives of the private sector.

Though the mandate of the 11-member roundtable, which will hold its first meeting on Thursday, is to suggest ways in which school education can be revamped in the country, sources said, "The ministry wants a synergy between government and private sector. There are big plans in school education and such a roundtable will help thrash out issues." The ministry has already proposed the setting up of 6,000 model schools out of which 2,500 will come up in the PPP mode.

The roundtable consists of Arun Kapur, director, Vasant Valley School; Rakesh Bharti Mittal, Bharti Foundation; Devi Kar, principal, Modern Girls High School, Kolkata; Anita Rampal, Central Institute of Education, Delhi University; Harpal Singh, Fortis; Manju Bharatram, chairman, Shriram Schools; Harsh Sethi, consulting editor, Seminar; Anil Bordia, former education secretary; Krishna Kumar, director, NCERT; Cyrus Vakil, director, Mahindra United World College of India, Pune; and Sailesh Shirali, former principal, Rishi Valley School.

Though most of the members of the roundtable said they would comment only after the first meeting, Manju Bharatram said, "I would like certain issues to be clarified. There are certain questions about the Right to Education law and public-private partnership." She said as far as inclusive education is concerned there are three ministries -- HRD, labour and social justice -- involved in various aspects of vocational education. "Should it not come under one ministry?" she asked.

In case of RTE, she said private schools would like to be involved in the framing of rules. She would also raise the issue of quality of teachers and emphasise on better training and regular workshops for them. In general, she said, there is a need to change many laws that govern running of schools in the country. In case of Delhi, she said, rules were made in 1973. "A more flexible environment is needed be it in curriculum or school administration," she said.

Source: New Delhi /timesofindia/23 September 2009

IITs need more autonomy

The IIT faculty is on a hunger strike! This is not something in Ripley's Believe it or Not but a challenge facing the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) today. It is not an ordinary wage dispute but part of a deeper malaise, which afflicts the higher education system in India.

The MHRD is fixing the new pay structure for the faculty, determining the percentage of promotions, incentive programmes, and micro managing the whole issue. Its view is that since public money is involved, there must be accountability and, therefore, the need to exercise control over the pay structure.

The faculty is incensed at the low pay, wants a pay structure comparable with that of scientists, harks upon the lack of respect being shown to them and the loss of flexibility in their career structure that they enjoy today. The hunger strike is a show of the lack of confidence in the MHRD.

Lack of autonomy

The basic issue is the lack of autonomy for the IIT boards of management to decide the pay and career structure for the faculty. Oxford and Cambridge in the UK and the University system in California are funded by the Government to a great extent. But the government does not fix the pay structure for the faculty and the terms of employment are governed by the independent boards.

These universities are held accountable for the outcome and have been successful. Of course, they have a long history and tradition and enjoy a great degree of autonomy. Our IITs/IIMs, however, are for administrative purposes treated as part of the government and their faculty akin to government servants, not keeping in view the need for autonomy.

It is often lamented that India has not produced any Nobel Laureate for long; we do not produce enough research and not enough PhDs. Our existing model, evolved over the past 50 years, has failed to deliver excellence and India has actually moved backwards in its global impact.

In his book *'A Better India: a Better World ',* Mr. N. R. Narayana Murthy says that "The absence of research excellence has seriously impacted India's scientific and technological output. India ranks a lowly 119th among 149 countries in the citations index. A McKinsey study found that the typical IIT was granted three to six patents in a year as against 64 for Stanford Engineering faculty and 102 for MIT Engineering faculty. India's pool of PhDs is less than one-tenth the size of the US pool."

Mr. Murthy also goes on to share various examples to demonstrate how over the last 30 years things have deteriorated, that India only has two universities in the top 500 in the world; the stifling bureaucracy and excessive control over institutes of higher education have impeded their progress. In the mid-sixties, IIT Kanpur was able to attract 350 PhDs from abroad, while it fails to attract even a handful today.

Govt. - PSU model

How can this be resolved? The Government of India (GoI) already has a model at work with its PSU's. The

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Government signs an MoU with each PSU every year, where the latter commits to a level of performance to the former as the owner, and the PSU is given limited powers.

The MHRD can try the same approach; sign an MoU with each IIT, under which the Government can promise to fund a certain amount in return for a certain outcome from the IITs. This will create an arms length between the two and enable the board of management to exercise the powers of governance and make the IIT more accountable.

The MHRD can also ensure that societal issues are dealt with in the same manner, since education obviously is a catalyst for social transformation and society casts a responsibility on the Government.

Focus on excellence

Since the faculty will have to deal with their own director and board, there will be greater focus on excellence and, perhaps, differential salaries between the IITs. There will be less constraint in hiring new faculty and offering superior pay scales. The IITs too should be enabled to raise their own resources so that they get financial independence over a period of time. Obviously, with such a varied and rich alumni, this should not be difficult!

The MHRD has more important things to do for India — only 12.4 per cent of youngsters in the age group of 18-24 are in college after 60 years of freedom; only 67 per cent of people are literate; more than 50 per cent of children drop out of school by the time they reach standard X. The greatest human tragedy in this planet is being played out in India and MHRD is spending its energies on controlling the IITs!

Source: /thehindubusinessline.com/26 September 2009

In new ministry, Sibal revives old dream: CSIR varsity

Having taken on the Human Resource Development (HRD) Ministry for not according it varsity status in the last UPA government, Kapil Sibal, who now heads the ministry himself, is trying to realise the CSIR varsity plan he nurtured as Minister for Science & Technology in the last UPA.

Highly placed sources confirmed to The Indian Express that the CSIR - Advanced Institute of Scientific Training (AIST) is finally set to see the light of day with ample support from the HRD ministry. Sibal has already held a series of meetings with CSIR, UGC and the HRD Ministry officers to resolve the outstanding issues at the earliest.

At the meeting last week, the Minister brought the two sides together to sort out the differences. Sibal is understood to have told UGC that personally he thought this to be a good initiative that needed to be pushed immediately. But the minister also said he was willing to examine any valid objections, sources said.

Sibal is also understood to have told UGC to come up with possible solutions to get around the objections they have raised. UGC is learnt to have assured Sibal that it will get back to the ministry in about two weeks.

In the last UPA under former HRD minister Arjun Singh, UGC had opposed granting the deemed to be university status to the CSIR-AIST. Having waited for four years to get a deemed university status for its educational arm from UGC, CSIR had given up and instead approached the Prime Minister's Office earlier this year to establish its own varsity independent of UGC and the HRD Ministry. Things, however, turned in their favour with former S&T minister Kapil Sibal bagging the HRD Ministry's chair after the Lok Sabha polls.

With its headquarters in Noida or Faridabad, the institute is envisaged as a set-up that will network between the 40-odd CSIR laboratories and pool resources and faculty across these to create a national-level university with a strong research focus. CSIR has also proposed that besides post-graduate courses, the varsity be allowed to run undergraduate level courses in both sciences and humanities. The objective is to stem the growing shortage of skilled manpower in the science and technology industry and the dwindling numbers of PhDs per annum.

According to Ernst and Young-EDG 2008 report on "Globalising Higher Education in India", there was a 58 per cent shortfall of engineers and 80 per cent shortfall in the case of doctorate scientists in the country. It is here that the CSIR-AIST is hoping to make a difference. CSIR has a total strength of 4,500 scientists, more than 1,000 of whom are actively involved in knowledge generation. In 2007, CSIR produced 3,800 publications. About 400 PhDs emerge out of CSIR labs ever year.

The need for setting up an educational arm of CSIR is felt due to some other reasons as well. About 2,200 junior and senior research fellows work full time in these laboratories while pursuing their PhDs. To obtain their PhDs, however, these research scholars have to enrol themselves at the nearby universities. This often causes logistical difficulties for the researches.

Realising this, former director general of CSIR R A Mashelkar, who has been a vocal supporter of research-led universities on the lines of Harvard and MIT, mooted the proposal for granting deemed university status to CSIR laboratories in 2002. The proposal also found favour with a UGC-appointed committee to look into the matter.

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Private funding for innovation varsities

Soon after taking the Foreign Universities Bill to the Cabinet for approval, the HRD Ministry is now planning to allow private funding for the 14 Innovation Universities proposed to be modelled on world-class standards. In his interaction with British Trade and Investment Minister Mervyn Davies, HRD Minister Kapil Sibal conveyed to him that the government was considering the public private partnership (PPP) model for this, said a HRD Ministry statement, adding that the government was already in the process of involving a PPP model in school education.

Source: /indianexpress.com/16 September 2009

Mixed reactions to IIT, IIM woes

The decision to go on a one-day strike by the faculty members of the premier Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), to protest the modified notification of the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD). Which, among other things, ignores their demand for a pay hike — has evoked a mixed response from the student community, alumni of the premier institutes, and guardians of education?

Professor Yash Pal, chairman of the Yash Pal Committee which recently submitted a report to the ministry on renovation and rejuvenation of higher education, said: “If all the central and state universities also start asking for higher pay, how is it possible to carry everyone? If the work is enough and pay reasonable, it should be acceptable. It’s not good to talk about money all the time. The HRD ministry will surely look into the requirements of the faculty members.”

“Meanwhile, it is more appropriate for the faculty to speak to the ministry rather than take measures like strikes,” he added.

Arbind Sinha, acting director, Mudra Institute of Communications, Ahmedabad (MICA), acknowledges that IIMs and the IITs “are centres of excellence and should be accorded special status. They should definitely be considered on a different package than faculty from other universities”. However, he adds that professors “should also be considerate beyond a certain point. The country’s economy is different from what it was two years ago. The faculty members should express their mandate with the government but they should not go on strikes. Strikes are beyond the dignity of a teacher”.

Students and alumni, however, take a more liberal and understanding view of the situation.

Faculty pay has been an issue for a long time and there is no doubt that faculty members should be paid better if we want to promote institutes like the IIMs, reasons Rashmi Bansal, IIM-A alumni and founder of JAM magazine. She insists that “we need to create an atmosohere that could attract the best professors in the world but that would be impossible without the government’s flexibility. In India, the only way to draw attention is to strike and after facing problems for a long time, the faculty has gone on strikes as a last resort. It wasn’t for a long duration either. All they are asking is for the government to give them reasonable pay because when professors are relocated to IIMs and IITs coming up in smaller centres, it would definitely involve some adjustments for them. Also, with increased workloads, the level of research will risk going down”.

Pratyush Ghosh, an alumnus of IIT-Kharagpur, concurs: “Professors who have stuck to IITs have stuck just for the love of teaching, since salaries and benefits are always at the lowest. Even IIM faculty members get better salaries. Visiting faculty are few and far between because IITs cannot afford it. Not all professors are going to endure this for ever. The HRD ministry should have seen it coming.”

Source: /business-standard.com/22 September 2009

Move to reduce strength of teachers decried

Even as both the chancellor's office and the state government have been emphasising on the necessity of rationalisation of teaching posts in different universities before starting the process of appointments against vacant posts, Patna University (PU) academics fail to comprehend the rationale behind the so-called rationalisation.

There seems to be a conspiracy to drastically reduce the strength of teachers in colleges and universities in the name of rationalisation with a view to reducing the financial burden on the public exchequer at the cost of quality, they said.

Patna University Teachers' Association general secretary Randhir Kumar Singh observed that the universities have got all these posts of teachers on the basis of their requirements. While the state government sanctioned some posts, others were sanctioned by the UGC during different plan periods. Surprisingly enough, the number of students has increased manifold in the last few decades and a number of new courses have been introduced during the period. Hence, there is no justification for reducing the strength of teachers, he said.

PU geography teacher R P Singh said that PU has already surrendered more than 100 posts of teachers to the state government following the delinking of Intermediate classes from PU colleges. Any further

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downsizing of the faculty members would prove catastrophic for the university, he said.

PU geology head B K Thakur pointed out that the number of seats in three-year degree honours classes has been increased in all the colleges following the delinking of Intermediate classes. The university has already demanded more teachers from the state government to ensure regular teaching in different subjects. "More than 50 new self-financing courses have been introduced in recent years which are also being taught by university teachers. The government for any of these courses has created not a single post of teacher. How will the university be able to conduct all its teaching programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate levels if the number of teachers is reduced," he asked.

PU pro-vice-chancellor S I Ahson admitted that there is no need of downsizing the strength of teachers in the university. More and more new departments like those of computer applications, biotechnology, bioinformatics, etc. are being set up in the university and they would require additional strength of faculty members. He hoped that the authorities concerned would take a positive approach towards rationalisation of teaching posts.

Meanwhile, PU Rationalisation Committee headed by physics head Rajmani Prasad Singh is learnt to have recommended appointments against all the vacant sanctioned posts of teachers as there was no need of reducing the strength of teachers in view of their increased workload.

Source: Patna /timesofindia/19 September 2009

Norway to set up marine engineering institute in India

The Human Resource Development Minister, Kapil Sibal today said Norway would make investments for setting up a marine engineering institute in India.

"We have 1,500 km of coastline and in the coming years we will require more marine engineers as we set up new ports and explore oil and gas. Therefore the institute will be a win win situation for both India and Norway," Sibal said, addressing 'Third Global Summit on Skills Development' organised by CII.

He did not give any details of the project such as its location and when it would be set up. The minister hoped that the foreign education providers' bill would be put in place by the next academic session (July 2010) paving the way for more collaboration between India and other countries.

"We can have boys and girls going from one country to another to get experience for a joint degrees", he said, adding the country's growing requirement for skilled workforce will be addressed with such a initiative.

In this context, he stressed the need for imparting skill education right from the school level and said if India has to create wealth it has to increase its 'Gross Enrolment Ratio' of students going for higher education to 30 per cent from the existing 12.4 per cent by 2022.

Source: New Delhi /business-standard/23 September 2009

Pharmaceutical Microbiology

Hello reader, hope you are finding pleased with the website. Well, this post about the microbiology also; how it plays essential role in the field of pharmacy and provides useful resource to you. For many years, they have been developing new techniques in microbiology keeping in mind about pharmaceuticals. In my opinion, pharmaceutical microbiology has critical place in drug development. If you are looking for a book having the information you need then this book is perfect for you.

This textbook specifically aims at the ever-demanding thoughtful need of an absolutely well documented compilation of factual details related to: theoretical principles, classifications, diagrammatic profiles, graphic presentations, critical explanation, latest examples for the Pharmacy Degree (B. Pharm.,) throughout the Indian Universities, SAARC-countries, and similar curricula adopted abroad. Modern invigorative society, based on the overwhelming and overemphasized broad-spectrum importance vis-a-vis utilities of 'Microbiology' profusely gets benefited from the intricate species of scores of microorganisms in several ways and means, namely: antibiotics, vaccines, enzymes, vitamins etc. Nevertheless, a quantum-leap-forward in the field of 'Modern Biotechnology' rests predominantly upon reasonably sound microbiological foundation.

Besides, microorganisms do modulate a plethora of vital and critical functionalities, such as:

(a) Enable completion of cycles of C, O, N and S, which essentially occur in both terrestrial and aquatic systems

(b) Provide absolutely indispensable components of prevailing ecosystem; and

(c) Serve as a critical source of 'nutrients' occurring at the grass-root of practically a large segment of ecological food webs and chains.

The entire course-content presented in 'Pharmaceutical Microbiology' has been meticulously and painstakingly developed and expanded as per the AICTE-Approved Syllabus–2000.

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Each chapter has been duly expatiated in a simple, lucid, and crisp language easily comprehensible by its august readers. A unique largely acceptable style of presentation has been adopted, viz., brief introduction, principles, labeled figures, graphics, diagrams of equipments, descriptions, explanations, pharmaceutical applications, and selected classical examples. Each chapter is duly elaborated with adequate foot-notes, references, and 'further reading references' at the end. An exhaustive glossary, Important Microbiological Terminologies, has been duly annexed at the end of the textbook. A fairly up to date computer-generated 'Index' in the textbook will surely enlarge the vision of its readers in gaining an easy access of subject enriched well documented text materials.

Textbook consists of Ten Chapters:

(1) Introduction and Scope;

(2) Structure and Function: Bacterial Cells;

(3) Characterization, Classification and Taxonomy of Microbes;

(4) Identification of Microorganisms;

(5) Nutrition, Cultivation and Isolation: Bacteria-Actinomycetes-Fungi-Viruses;

(6) Microbial Genetics and Variations;

(7) Microbial Control by Physical and Chemical Methods;

(8) Sterility Testing: Pharmaceutical Products;

(9) Immune Systems;

(10) Microbiological (Microbial) Assays: Antibiotics–Vitamins–Amino Acids.

The text material essentially embodies not only an ample emphasis on the vivid coverage of fundamental principles of microbiology as a scientific discipline but also maintains a manageable length for the apprehension of brilliant students.

Source: /pharmacyebooks.com/29 September 2009

Plan for your child's future with right life policy

Are you comfortable telling your children that 15 years hence you would be there to take care of their financial needs? Wouldn't you rather guarantee that their future is safe, whether you are there or not? Life insurance helps provide that guarantee.

Not only do such products provide financial protection for your family in case something unfortunate happens to you, they also have a savings element for your long-term needs.

The Indian insurance industry has seen many changes since the sector opened up in 2000. The private life insurance companies have also changed the way insurance is sold in the country. From being a tax savings tool, insurance is now being bought to satisfy specific needs like creation of a fund for a child's education, saving for one's retirement and so on.

Insurers have introduced innovative products and a need-based sales approach wherein only those products that satisfy a customers' needs are recommended. To explain this better, lets take an example of planning for one's child's education.

According to the latest survey on saving habits of urban parents, conducted by Aviva and IMRB, investment in education is the topmost priority for Indians and a key reason for saving. The survey reveals that college education ranks the highest concern for 93% of parents saving for child's future. Almost 77% parents feel anxious about the cost of higher education which is slated to grow at a far higher rate owing to rise in inflation and feel that it requires panning at their end.

So how do parents combat financial volatility given the current economic scenario? Well, the answer is fairly simple. One has to be smart while planning investments for future. The key to successful planning of a child's future is in starting early and assessing the needs (keeping in mind the hidden costs) carefully. Your child may want to be a doctor, an engineer or a pilot tomorrow.

As a parent, you want to ensure that he/she is provided with the best education, which entails high cost and needs a large corpus. You may think that you have enough time to save for the same. However, for each year that you delay saving, you will need to invest a larger amount to secure your child's future.

Considering that you would need a corpus of Rs 10,00,000 for your child's education, if you start saving when your child is less than 1 year of age, you would need to pay a premium of Rs 39,771 pa. However, if you start saving when your child is 7 years old, you would need to pay an annual premium of Rs 82,045. This means, that you would end up paying an additional sum of Rs 42,274.

There are four simple steps to define how a child plan works:

Step 1 – Decide the corpus you wish to provide for your child's future and the time when the same should be made available. This will define the premium and policy term.

Step 2 – Choose the level of protection you require. This should be reflected in sum assured and the riders (like income benefit, comprehensive health benefit and accidental death benefit) that you choose. This would ensure that no matter what happens to you, your

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child's future is secure and his education is not affected.

Step 3 – Choose the premium, premium payment term and frequency.

Step 4 – Choose the funds you want to invest based on your risk appetite.

Child plans not only fulfil the investment objective, but also provide protection in case something unfortunate happens to the parent. This is the only product that ensures that the corpus that you have planned to save for their child's future is available when your child is 18 or 21 years old. The choice of product, however, depends on the risk appetite of parents.

There are various plans available in the market, with options like premium waiver — so that the policy continues even in case of the parent's death, disability or critical illness (if the rider has been opted for), while the sum assured is paid out. Income Benefit plans also provide regular income (if the rider has been opted for) to meet the child's everyday expenses in case of the parent's death. On maturity you get the fund value.

Once again, while the key to successful planning for future is to start early, at the same time, it is never too late to get started.

Source: /economic times/27 September 2009

Promoting Professional Qualification with German Partners

iMOVE Informs at the Global Summit on Skills Development and at the Worlddidac India in New Delhi from September 24th to 26th, 2009

In order to initiate and extend German-Indian projects in the training sector, iMOVE presents cooperation opportunities at the Global Summit on Skills Development and at the Worlddidac India.

iMOVE is the official partner of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) in organising the Global Summit on Skills Development. The event is featuring the slogan "Strengthening the skills delivery system - quality versus quantity." German training providers will present their services and cooperation offers in special interest workshops.

iMOVE will also be present at the Worlddidac India. The Worlddidac is the most prominent trade fair in the field of education for southern asia. By organising the event in New Delhi for the first time, Germany and India aim at promoting their close cooperation in professional qualification. iMOVE will present information pertaining to Germany's capabilities in vocational training.

Both events aim at fruitful partnerships and business relations between educational institutions, training providers and enterprises. "Training - Made in Germany" stands for the internationally recognised quality of the German vocational training system. It is based on long experience and characterised by practice-orientation and a strong responsiveness to the demands of the labour market. For more information see: www.imove-germany.de/english.

iMOVE (International Marketing of Vocational Education) is an initiative of the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research. iMOVE promotes international cooperation and supports the initiation of collaborations and business relations in vocational training and continuing education.

For further information please contact: iMOVE at the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training, Ms. Silvia Niediek, Public Relations, phone +49-228-107-1702, e-mail niediek@imove-germany.de.

Source: New Delhi /blog.taragana.com/16 September 2009

Right to Education may increase quota to 40 per cent in schools

New Delhi Schools that have been allotted land by the government at lower rates might now have to reserve almost 40 per cent of seats for students from poorer sections.

A Delhi High Court ruling in 2007 had set aside a 15 per cent quota — 10 per cent for children from the economically weaker section (EWS) and five per cent for those of staff. In case the five per cent staff quota wasn't filled, those seats would also go to EWS children.

Newsline has learnt that an additional 25 per cent is being considered for reservation under the Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act (RTE) for the 390 schools that are on government land allotted at concessional rates.

Section 12(B) of the RTE says the reservation should be a minimum of 25 per cent. Sources said Education department officials are now discussing the technicalities of the Act and how to implement both quotas. Sources said outlays have to be made in the budget too.

"The RTE is an Act now. Schools should know that. Ignorance of the law is not an excuse. We will create awareness about the new Act and the government is working out modalities for its implementation," sources said. "It will be implemented only after the government approves," they said.

While the government will reimburse private and unaided schools the cost of reserving the 25 per cent

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seats, education is to be provided free of cost to poor children under the EWS quota.

Sources also said that schools should consider the 25 per cent reservation irrespective of whether they have been allotted land at a cheaper rate. “Land allotment is a separate issue. Why do we have to club it together? The 25 per cent reservation for poor kids under RTE will be implemented in all schools,” they said.

But private, unaided schools that are already required by law to give 15 per cent reservation to EWS children have called the idea “outrageous and ridiculous.”

Principals have said they are not aware of what the government is thinking. They want the EWS quota of 15 per cent to be absorbed in the RTE’s 25 per cent quota. They say the total reservation should be 25 per cent and not 40.

‘‘All private schools should then shut shop,” Vandana Puri, principal of Salwan Public School, said. “The burden will fall on those who pay. And the government won’t let us hike school fees either.

It won’t suffice even if the government pays for the children in that 25 per cent quota. This has to be contested. This is illogical.”

The Salwan Trust got land from the government at concessional rates in the 1950s.

The RTE has a Centre-state, fund-sharing scheme for implementation of the 25 per cent quota. In private schools, the government will reimburse the cost of reserving seats for poor children at government rates.

The schools will have to bear the additional cost, principals say.

Source: Indian Express, 23 Sep 2009

Schools to now flash the quality card

In his three years at Kendriya Vidyalaya at RK Puram in Delhi, Bharath Kesav has never been more impressed with his school than he is now. Over the past six months, the class XII student and his schoolmates watched in awe their modest government-run schools metamorphose into a model campus, even private schools envy. Today, their teachers use audio-visual aids and power point presentations in classrooms, and the school has a vastly improved computer lab and a great music room.

‘‘It’s great...even the principal, teachers, and staff are more active now,” said 16-year-old Bharath. According to the principal DP Thakur, the school will be investing a total of Rs 1 crore in improving its infrastructure. “We are upgrading the entire infrastructure; classrooms, labs, even washrooms,” he said.

The school is also open to ideas. “We have put up suggestion boxes inside the campus for students, teachers to give ideas on how to better our offering. Our stakeholders can now share their perspective through our interactive website,” said Mr Thakur.

Impressed? Well, hundreds of schools — both private and public — around the country could be aggressively building similar facilities in the next couple of years, as they chase what RK Puram Kendriya Vidyalaya has: a certificate from National Accreditation Board for Education and Training (Nabet).

Nabet is the country’s first initiative to certify educational institutes for their quality of services. It rates schools according to the standards developed by its parent organisation, the Quality Council of India, in what is seen as a major attempt to raise the country’s education system to global standards.

‘‘The idea is to make our accreditation a benchmark for parents to select schools for their children,” said Vipin Sahni, director of Nabet, which started functioning this year.

The Quality Council of India (QCI) is an autonomous body set up by the government in partnership with industry bodies like CII, Ficci and Assocham to form a national accreditation structure to uphold international standards in various sectors and domains.

The education system in the country is widely seen inadequate to deal with the demands of modern-day life and work culture. Government schools around the country, particularly in hinterland, are afflicted by poor infrastructure and teacher absenteeism, while there are no set standards compared with private schools.

‘‘The problem of quality and access is not new. Besides, regulation on its own doesn’t help much, if people themselves are not motivated,” said MM Joshi, joint secretary of Kendriya Vidyalaya Sanghatan (KVS) that runs the 981-central schools across the country. “Nabet’s accreditation process leads to self evaluation by students and staff members. It’s a right way to approach the issue than regulating things.”

Till now, besides the Delhi school, Nabet has accredited Kendriya Vidyalaya at IIT Powai in Mumbai and Modern School in Lucknow.

Across India, there are 40-50 schools, both government and private, in advanced stages of getting certified. There are 22 Kendriya Vidyalayas and Delhi’s 11 Navyug schools for poor kids in line.

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Nabet accredits schools across primary, secondary and higher secondary levels on three parameters: infrastructure and support mechanism, school governance and monitoring of progress.

While the certification is voluntary, the agency expects 300-400 schools to seek its accreditation over the next couple of years.

Already, some 15 states, including Delhi, West Bengal, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Bihar and Jharkhand, are in talks with Nabet to accredit at least one school in each district.

Jharkhand has identified some schools such as Netarhat Residential School at Latehar and Delhi public schools at Shamli and Ranchi.

‘‘Infrastructure and quality have always been a issue in school education. We hope to address that through this,” said Mridula Sinha, Jharkhand’s HRD secretary. “These schools can inspire others to improve themselves.”

Once a school applies for accreditation, Nabet sends its assessors (it has a core team of 1,000 assessors) to rate the school. If it is not up to the level for accreditation, then the school is given a feedback and asked to improve. For government schools, it runs a pilot programme to bring them up to a minimum standard before accrediting them.

The process lasts 3-6 months depending on the requirement. The certification will be reviewed every year to check if an institution is keeping up with promises.

‘‘We will cancel the certification, if they don’t comply with the rules and don’t follow the standards,” said Mr. Sahni.

As competition increases in the education system, it is hoped that Nabet sets a minimum benchmark for schools to attract more students.

Also, in the long-run educational boards like Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) and Indian Certificate for Secondary Education (ICSE) may insist on Nabet accreditation for affiliated schools.

School accreditation system exists in most developed countries. In the UK, Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills) does it. In the US, several regional agencies like Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools (MSA) undertake the task of rating schools.

But the task of certifying schools is not easy, as there are about four lakh schools around the country. “It’s a long climb, but worth the effort every bit,” said Mr. Sahni.

Source: New Delhi /economic times/28 September 2009

Sibal eyes tie-ups with leading global universities

The ministry for human resource development is keen to tie up with the world’s leading universities to ensure that its “innovation universities” are a class apart from the pack. During his visit to the US in late October, the minister for human resource development Kapil Sibal would like to firm up MoUs with leading US universities to collaborate with the proposed innovation universities.

Among the American universities that are being approached are Yale, Standford and MIT. The government plans to set up 14 innovation universities over the next few years.

The government proposes to set up these universities as “global centres of innovation” and would like to draw on the talent and expertise of leading universities. “We are looking for a collaboration for two or three of the innovation universities,” a senior ministry official said. India has had a history of collaborating with leading international universities to set up her own world class institutions.

The Iits and Iims were set up in collaboration and partnership with leading international institutes. “The nature of the partnership will be different. We are better equipped now than we were when the IITs were set up,” the official said. The exact nature of the partnership is still being worked out.

Mr. Sibal, who will be travelling to the US ahead of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh’s state visit in November, will leading a delegation to put in place the India-US Education Council. As part of the preparation, last week Mr. Sibal met with Timothy Roemer, the US Ambassador to India. Sources said that discussions centred on chartered schools, vocational education options and twinning programmes at the higher education level.

The human resource development minister has been actively seeking tie-up partnerships with foreign education institutions. Earlier this month, possible areas of collaboration were discussed by UK’s trade and investment minister Mervyn Davies and Mr. Sibal. The British minister had indicated teacher training as one of the possible areas of collaboration.

At last week’s meeting Mr. Sibal and Mr. Roemer are understood to have also discussed the legislation that would permit foreign education institutions and universities to set up campus in India. A legislative proposal detailing out the legal and regulatory framework for foreign education providers is pending with the Cabinet Secretariat for approval by the Cabinet.

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The ministry would like the Bill to be introduced in Parliament during the winter session, so that it can be in place by the next academic session.

Source: New Delhi /economictimes/29 September 2009

UGC to ban second term for VCs in same varsity

The University Grants Commission will ban varsities across the country from re-appointing the same vice-chancellors for a second term after the end of their five-year tenure in a move aimed at limiting politicisation of post.

In new regulations setting minimum qualification requirements at all Indian varsities, the UGC is specifically barring reappointments for VCs at the same university, The Telegraph has learnt.

‘‘There shall not be a re-appointment of the vice-chancellor for the second term in the same university,’’ according to the draft regulations to be published in the Gazette of India.

The draft regulations however, clarify that “appointment for another term as vice-chancellor is admissible in other central/state universities” based on the candidate’s performance in his first stint as VC.

The tenure of a VC, his service conditions and whether he can be re-appointed at present can technically vary from university to university.

Till now, these conditions were laid down by the statutes accompanying the act — of Parliament or Assemblies — that created the university, and not by the UGC.

While all other central universities already specifically forbid a second term for a VC, the statutes governing Jamia Millia Islamia — also a central university — allow the re-appointment of a VC.

State universities in different parts of the country follow different norms at present.

But once the new UGC regulations come into effect, all universities across the country have to — if necessary — amend their statutes to meet the minimum qualifications for appointments that the commission is laying down.

UGC sources expressed hope that the move would end any fears of the incumbent VC influencing the selection panel that has to either re-appoint him or find a new choice.

The bar on a second term at the same university for VCs comes amid stated efforts by human resource development minister Kapil Sibal to reduce political interference in appointments of varsity chiefs.

Sibal has already announced intentions to set up an independent collegiums of academic experts that will recommend central university VCs, replacing the current practice under which an HRD ministry-appointed team shortlists candidates.

The current mechanism to appoint VCs has repeatedly drawn criticism from academics who allege that it allows the HRD ministry to appoint pliant members on the VC selection panel.

The UGC move also comes close on the heels of a long-drawn battle for the post of VC at Jamia, which eventually embroiled even advisers to UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi.

Source: /telegraphindia.com/27 September 2009

ANALYSIS/OPINION/INNOVATIVE PRACTICE

Delhi picks knowledge, Mumbai attitude for jobs

When it comes to employability, what’s more important, education and domain knowledge or personality and attitude? If you’re a student in Delhi, chances are you’ll pick the former. Mumbai students, though, would opt for the latter even as those in Bangalore would probably understand the importance of both sets of skills. This is just one of the several findings thrown up by a recent employability survey by Frost and Sullivan, a research agency that partner with companies to accelerate their growth.

‘‘There are several studies on employability skills from the point of view of corporates and managements. For once, we wanted to look at the subject through the eyes of students. We wanted to figure out their opinions and attitudes on the job market, as well as the skills they found important and the ones they felt they lacked,’’ Frost and Sullivan consultant Karen Braganza said.

Around 1,000 students from Mumbai, Delhi and Bangalore were surveyed for the study. Most of them were between the ages of 20 and 24. While two-thirds of the students were pursuing a graduate degree, the remaining were pursuing diploma courses. Students were asked to rate the importance of a variety of skill sets, including education and domain knowledge, communication skills, decision-making skills, leadership, motivation, presentation skills as well as attitude and personality. While Bangalore students seemed to think all the skills were more-or-less equally important for employability, students from Delhi considered domain knowledge and presentation amongst the most important. Mumbai students, though, opted for soft skills, such as attitude and personality, communication and decision-making.

‘‘Mumbai students seem to recognise that, while searching for a job, they will be competing with several

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others with similar educational qualifications. What sets them apart, then, are their skills in other spheres of life,'' says Braganza. Under 20% of students surveyed said they were pursuing an additional course along with their regular studies. Of those who opted for additional courses, most students chose one in computer application and programming, while some opted for courses in English. The maximum duration for these courses was 4-8 months. Students said primary reason for pursuing an add-on course was to make them more employable, and not for higher pay.

Another rather surprising finding turns the adage 'Don't judge a book by its cover' on its head. The majority of students said that the ideal course would comprise of 30% domain knowledge and 70% soft skills.

Measuring their own proficiency at various skills, majority of Delhi respondents felt they had more than the necessary proficiency in most skills. Bangalore students felt their proficiency matched desired levels, while Mumbai felt they were a less proficient.

Source: Mumbai /timesofindia/24 September 2009

Divide in higher education in India

Of late, higher education in India has been in the news for many reasons. The new HRD Minister Kapil Sibal has been busy drafting new bills and formulating new policies to give a big push to higher education and to open up the higher education sector to foreign universities and their affiliates.

In this scenario, two issues have been the major focus:

(a) The need to improve the enrolment ratio from the present, dismal ratio of about 10 percent – that is, only 10 percent of eligible young students enrol in colleges in India – to about 15/20 per cent in the next decade to catch up with the rest of the world in some ways. (Though the official enrolment ratio in India is about 11 per cent, if we go by how many of these students are really learning anything in reasonably well–equipped colleges, my guess is that the ratio will be down to alarmingly low level of about 5 per cent.) For example, in the US and Europe, the enrolment ratio is more than 60 percent. Even in China, our favourite competitor these days, the ratio is about 19 percent.

(b) The need to urgently improve the quality of higher education in the country to make it more competitive globally and to emerge 'global knowledge hub' in the near future.

However, any meaningful discussion on these two issues has to recognize two alarming features of higher education system in the country. These are:

(a) The low public spending by the government on education. For decades, central government in India has not spent more than 3-3.5 per cent of its total budget on education despite committing itself to 6 per cent target on different forums and only a part of this low budget is spent on higher education. Similarly, education, specifically higher education, has been a low priority for state governments as well.

(b) Further, even out of this relatively low spending on higher education by the central government, a major portion of this money is spent on institutions like the IITs, IIMs, other similar institutions and central universities, like Delhi University where only a few lakh students study while state universities and colleges – the backbone of higher education in the country with a large number of students – continue to suffer from chronic lack of resources, facilities and infrastructure.

Thus even with a low enrolment ratio of about 10 per cent, the system of higher education in India is highly stratified and includes diverse institutions, colleges and universities with marked distinctions and differences among them. The HRD ministry itself has divided these institutions in two broad categories:

(a) university and higher education, and

(b) technical (higher) education.

While institutions imparting higher education are governed by the UGC and include central universities, state universities and colleges, deemed universities and private, unaided universities and colleges, institutions of technical education including IITs, IIMs and similar institutions are governed directly by the MHRD.

There are 39 central universities in the country – 15 of them were established early this year in a major policy decision by the government – and are directly funded by the central government through the UGC. Similarly, 60 institutions of technical education are directly funded by the central government through the ministry and governed by different laws and regulations. These include 13 IITs (including 6 new IITs set up in 2008-09) and 13 IIMs (including 6 new proposed IIMs to be set up soon). On the other hand, 251 state universities are the primary responsibility of the respective state governments even though the UGC defines the regulatory framework for them and provides some funds to many of them (not all) from time to time.

Almost on all parameters of education and facilities, there is a marked difference between these different types of institutions, universities and colleges. One

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major parameter is the terms of conditions of recruitment and pay scales of faculty in these institutions and colleges. Though teachers, the backbone of any system of higher education, have broadly the same qualifications, depending on which institution, university and college they join, their working conditions and opportunities for professional career and promotions dramatically change. In terms of pay scales and the age of retirement, as of now, there are these four categories of institutions and colleges:

a) IITs and IIMs:

In an IIT, a new teacher with Ph D starts with a much higher basic pay than a university and college teacher with Ph D. Further, IIT faculty moves up the ladder at a much faster pace throughout his/her career. IIT/IIM professors do not have to pass any NET/SET examination for any department. So, a young lecturer with Ph D, say in sociology or even in a branch of engineering, can directly join an IIT/IIM at a much higher pay without NET/SET, but will need to first pass the additional NET/SET exam to join a college and university department at a much lower pay and much slower pace of promotion throughout!

Other centrally funded professional colleges like IIITs and others offer pay scales which are slightly lower than scales for IITs and IIMs, the overall promotional policy for teachers in these institutions is better than that for college and university teachers.

b) Central Universities and affiliated colleges:

Central universities and their affiliated colleges offer pay scales distinctly lower than for centrally funded technical institutions, among institutions of higher education, they offer the UGC recommended pay scales to their teachers.

The age of retirement for teachers in all centrally funded institutions, including IITs and IIMs is now 65 years, extendable up to 70 years in some cases on contract.

c) State Universities and affiliated colleges:

A few of them revise scales (with Basic Pay and DA) as per the UGC recommendation and at par with central universities but other allowances are always as applicable to their large state bureaucracies and not much else. Here, the retirement age for teachers also varies enormously: from 55 years to 62 years.

Then, there are many states, which have not yet implemented the last (fifth) pay commission recommendations for their college and university teachers. It is highly unlikely that they will now implement the new UGC package in a hurry.

The retirement age of teachers across states varies enormously between 55 years and 62 years.

d)Others:

Finally, we have a large number of teachers in self-financing course and colleges where there is no state funding and their scales are at the mercy of their managements. Some will pay the new scales and many will not, though all of them insist on UGC recommended qualifications in most cases, as in Maharashtra.

And, of course, there are thousands of contract teachers all over the country whose fate remains uncertain at all times. Many of them are paid as low as Rs 8000-1000 per month as a consolidated amount though they carry out all the work in their colleges. Alarmingly, this number is steadily growing. For example, in Maharashtra, many professional colleges have been set up and, many new courses in existing colleges and other arts, science and commerce colleges have been sanctioned by the state government in recent years. All of these new colleges are on no-grant basis. All these colleges have to sign a legally binding agreement that they will never ask the state government for any grant in future for anything including the salary of teachers! In other words, while the number of colleges and courses is going up, the commitment of the state towards higher education is declining as a matter of state policy.

Further, there are issues regarding teaching and assessment work load, administrative work, facilities, laboratories, research grants and grants for national and international conferences, infrastructure, library and computer facilities and the gap continues to widen.

The stark contrast between IIT / IIMs and other institutions is again evident through the wide gap between the proposed allocation of funds for new IITs/ IIMs in the central budget and the funds allocated for colleges in 354 educationally backward districts of the country. While each new IIT and IIM has been allocated hundreds of crores per institution, for these 354 model colleges, approximately Rs 10 crore per college by the UGC in deemed sufficient to set up the college. And once the college is set up, the respective state government is expected to pick up the tab for recurring expenditure! For thousands of other colleges, there is no money at all.

Thus, ironically, but perhaps not surprisingly, in India, we have the strange spectacle where the renewed focus on higher education by the central government means liberal, enhanced, continuous funding by the state for a few elite institutions like IITs/IIMs and central universities with only a fraction of total students, some funding for a large number of existing colleges and universities in states and almost no funding for colleges and universities where crores of

ordinary, poor students – the large majority – enroll and study.

Unless, we have a concerted public campaign demanding some core parity between the state funding of colleges of all kinds – from IITs to small colleges in remote areas – and some basic uniformity in facilities in all kinds of colleges and terms and conditions of work, including pay scales, for teachers employed in these institutions and colleges, the dream of India as a global knowledge hub is likely to remain a distant dream

Source: /edu-factory.org/21 September 2009

Don't dilute excellence for regulation, IIT faculty tell Sibal

The government must not dilute excellence and quality in the name of regulating the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), their faculty shot back Tuesday, hours after Human Resource Development Minister Kapil Sibal asked them to refrain from protests.

Don't dilute the structure of the IITs. In the name of regulation, the government must not dilute the excellence of these institutions," M. Thenmozhi, head of the IITs National Faculty Federation, told IANS.

It is not about money but about quality. What we are demanding in terms of hike is less than the Goverdhan Mehta Committee suggestions. As of now, we will go by our decision of hunger strike on Thursday, she said.

On Monday, over 1,300 teachers of the IITs decided to launch hunger strike Thursday to protest the government's "apathy" towards their demand for a higher pay package and relaxation in teachers' appointment rules.

Expressing his disapproval of their move, Sibal Tuesday stressed, "The faculty behavior doesn't meet IIT standards".

It is not possible to say there will be no regulation, as we are accountable to parliament and the people of India. We have to impose eligibility conditions," Sibal added.

Thenmozhi said faculties are not dead against regulation but there should not be any compromise with quality. After our meeting Monday, the federation has submitted a memorandum to the ministry Tuesday. We hope to get an official reply.

Replying to Sibal's argument that fresh PhDs should not be appointed as teachers on a permanent basis, she said: When a fresh PhD is appointed in an university, he/she does not join on contract. Then why should it happen in case of the IITs? If a quality, fresh PhD can produce good things, then why take him or her on contract?

Sibal had said that a PhD holder with no teaching experience should not be immediately absorbed into the system. If he has had two years' teaching experience, then he can have a one-year contract and then we can absorb him. If no experience, then it'll take him three years to be absorbed."

Source: New Delhi /blog.taragana.com/22 September 2009

Education is not a choice of bad vs worse

The last student that got into Delhi University's Shriram College of Commerce (SRCC) this year got 94% in Class 12. So the 81% that got me into this college in 1987 would not be good enough for admission today. What is going on? There are three possible explanations. The first hypothesis is that today's kids are smarter than my cohort. Based on a recent visit to the SRCC campus and, at the risk of sounding like an old crank confusing nostalgia with amnesia, I can testify that today's kids are not smarter than us. Better dressed for sure, better looking maybe, thinner possibly, but more intelligent—not really! The second explanation could be that there has been hyperinflation in the way exams are scored and the new 81% is 96%. The third and most logical explanation is that higher education capacity (supply) has just not kept up with the number of students applying (demand) so the cut-off percentages reflect the price of a bag of rice in a famine i.e. it is not a fair price but reflects an acute shortage. This famine in Indian higher education is set to accelerate because of the combustible combination of stronger school enrolment (powered by Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan and rising incomes) and our demographic dividend—about 75 lakh students took various Class 12 exams last year.

I argue that the only sustainable solution to this famine is a massive expansion in capacity i.e. ending the license raj, which breeds an adverse selection in education entrepreneurs. This deregulation-driven capacity expansion will facilitate thousands of statistically independent tries in education. But we must be realistic in our expectations about a massive capacity expansion without a short term drop in quality. In fact, solving our higher education famine may require us to accept three painful truths in the short run: a) a bad college is better than no college, b) the most expensive college for a child is no college, c) it's easier to improve quality in an existing college than to create a new college.

But as horrifying as these truths sound, educational institutions are not like Athena in Greek mythology

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who sprung fully formed from the head of Zeus—they need time and competition to mature. In fact, we may be seeing the first signs of competition and oversupply in engineering colleges in South India; we have had a flood of them approach us to understand employability criteria...

Source: /financialexpress/23 September 2009

Get cracking on RTE: Sibal to states

To set the ball rolling for the implementation of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, HRD minister Kapil Sibal has written to state chief ministers to take initiative. The ministry is keen that the Act becomes an "instrument for systemic reform in the elementary education sector".

The ministry is in the process of estimating the capital and recurring cost of implementing the Act. A rough estimate comes to between Rs 1,50,000 crore and Rs 2,00,000 crore. While a lion share of this is met through allocations for the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, the ministry still faces a shortfall of Rs 60,000 crore. As part of its mid-term review, the Planning Commission is understood to have informed the ministry that there may be a downward revision of its allocation for the Eleventh plan period on account of the economic downturn.

While the ministry works out the issues of cost and resources, Mr. Sibal would like the states to "introduce and institutionalise" systemic reform. In his letter, the minister has flagged off issues relating to curricula, augmenting teacher education capacity, and bringing existing state laws in consonance with the central law.

States have been asked to design curricula in conformity with values enshrined in the Constitution, as well as to provide for "child centred, child friendly pedagogies, and assessment systems". Among the tasks, that the states need to undertake at the earliest is to ensure that all schools conform to norms and standards laid down in the schedule of the Act. They also need to initiate action under delegated legislation to formulate rules, as specified in the central Act. Besides which states need to ensure that existing state laws are in line with the Central Act. More than a dozen states have laws that legislate free and compulsory education.

Another crucial area of action is that of teacher availability. This is strictly in the state's domain. Mr. Sibal has asked that states augment their teacher education capacity so as to ensure their re-appointment on the basis of national norms, which will be determined by a national agency. The other area of action is the re-deployment of teachers to ensure that the prescribed pupil-teacher ratio is maintained and there is a system of regular recruitment for annual vacancies.

In keeping with the aim of initiating reforms in the education sector, Mr. Sibal has suggested that states re-orient themselves from an approach of providing incentives and benefits to that of child rights and entitlements. This, he suggests, would require a re-orientation of the administrative staff on the rights perspective.

Sticking to the idea of consensus, the minister has asked that the states act expeditiously to "disseminate information and create general awareness on key provisions of the Act". Further to organise state, district and block level workshops bringing together civil society, teachers associations, parents and educationists to address the challenges of access, equity and quality.

Source: New Delhi /economictimes/25 September 2009

'Healthcare opportunities not fully explored'

Indian healthcare providers have not fully explored the opportunities in indigenisation of medical equipment and textiles, training of medical and paramedical staff and treatment of out-patients among others.

These also have the potential to reduce costs of treatment incurred by patients apart from helping the hospital realise better returns, according to various healthcare professionals.

Speaking on 'Challenges and opportunities in healthcare services and allied industries' at the Indian School of Business' healthcare and pharma conclave here on Saturday, Daljit Singh, president (strategy and organisational development) of Fortis Healthcare, said superspecialty hospitals, which need heavy investment, had a mandate to cater to the upper class. These cannot be extended without a profit motive due to the inherent capital expenditure, he said.

"There is a need for increasing medical and nursing colleges at least four times the present number to deal with the shortage of manpower," he said. The shortage of doctors is estimated to be 5, 00,000 and that of nurses to be one million.

Apollo Health City chief executive officer Hari Prasad said the healthcare sector was grappling with a shortage of trained manpower to tackle the backend operations of hospitals. The medical and nursing education were still offered under archaic guidelines. "There is nothing contemporary in these," he said.

Stating that there was a need to tweak Aarogyasri, a third party health insurance scheme in Andhra Pradesh, to make it sustainable, he said hospitals

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were not being consulted while fixing tariffs for various treatments covered under the scheme. “They are fixed on the advice of the insurance companies.”

Max Healthcare director-chief medical affairs (external) Shubnum Singh said healthcare institutions found it difficult to get finance. Though it employs the largest number of employees, the sector does not enjoy special incentives from the government like other trade-oriented sectors.

“Many perceive that providing healthcare was the onus of the government, but the latter has a dismal record in spending when it mattered,” she added.

Source: /business-standard.com/28 September 2009

HRD panel feels many deemed varsities don't deserve the status

The HRD ministry's review committee looking into deemed universities has finalised areas in which there have been deviations. In fact, there is a growing opinion among the members that deemed status of many of the institutions should go.

A highly placed source said the review panel, in its two-day meeting which ended on Friday, decided that its report would consist of separate sections on the idea of a `university' and a `deemed university', UGC guidelines for deemed universities and whether deemed universities have fulfilled them.

The committee has already met 12 times and would meet again on October 3 and 4 to finalise the report.

A source said, "The idea is to have a kind of a general statement about the kind of aberration that has taken place in the functioning of deemed universities -- quality of faculty, infrastructure, research and other things. The status of each university will also be given in detail."

On Friday, the committee finalised areas in which it felt there have been major deviations. These include administrative structure, academic practices, facilities to students and the state of research. "Inconsistency in the case of many deemed universities is too evident to be overlooked. Many of them cite research articles in unknown journals. Even the fee structure is questionable and so is the pattern of promoters appointing themselves as vice-chancellors," a source said.

He also pointed out a huge gap in quality between private and central government-run deemed universities. "We will highlight this discrepancy. It disproves the myth that private institutions have better facilities," he said, adding that many of the private deemed universities are good institutions but do not deserve university status.

The committee is discussing the replies given by 92 deemed universities to its detailed questionnaire. It is also going through the presentations made by them. "We have found some inconsistency in their reply and presentation," a source said

Source: New Delhi /timesofindia/26 September 2009

Lest IITs go the Air India way

The Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) are undoubtedly crown jewels in India’s system of higher education. Their contribution to making India largely self-reliant in top-notch manpower needs in diverse areas of engineering in the pre-liberalisation era, and to India’s emergence as a powerhouse in the knowledge economy in the era of liberalisation and globalisation is uncontestable. Even IITians who went abroad in large numbers have served the motherland in their own ways by achieving excellence in their professions and thus enhancing India’s prestige globally.

With India beginning to offer better opportunities than before for the flowering of their talent, many of them are either returning home or supporting technology-driven ventures here, thus transforming “brain drain” into “brain gain”. True, IITs have many shortcomings. But none can deny their potential to address unmet expectations and to make India more proud. Which is why, there is a clamor for more of them to be set up. And the UPA government deserves kudos for its decision to establish nine new IITs, adding to the earlier bouquet of seven.

Given the enormous prestige they enjoy, it was disconcerting to know that over 1,500 IIT teachers went on a one-day hunger strike last week. As an alumnus of IIT Bombay, I was both puzzled and perturbed by their unprecedented protest action. However, after speaking to several retired and current professors, I am convinced that the teachers’ case is more than half justified.

Two sets of issues are agitating the IIT faculty. One is related to the pay of new entrants. Contrary to public perception, IIT teachers are not very highly paid. The starting salary of an assistant professor with a PhD is a mere

Rs 26,000. Only a quarter of the teachers, mostly at senior levels, earn more through institute-approved consultancy services. But the gap between their salaries and perks, and what similarly qualified professionals earn in industry and in some privately run technology institutes is considerable—and steadily widening. Therefore, if IITs have to attract and retain

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top-quality teaching talent, their compensation package has to be higher.

But pay-related issues are not bothering faculty members (many of whom have sacrificed lucrative options in India and abroad to be in the teaching profession) as much as the fear of erosion of the IITs' autonomy. They have well-grounded concerns that the newly issued diktats of the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) would "adversely affect the ethos and culture of our institutes" and undermine their mission to achieve higher levels of institutional excellence. For example, the MHRD wants 10 per cent of the total faculty to be hired at the level of assistant professors "on contract", at salaries lower than permanent positions.

At a time when IITs are already facing severe shortage of suitably qualified teachers and finding it difficult to attract new ones, the new regulation is a huge disincentive for bright young Ph.Ds to choose this option. Another example: MHRD has ordered that only 40 per cent of professors with six years of experience can advance to the next academic grade pay level within the same post, and also that one should be associate professor for at least four years within IITs and specified institutions to be considered for the post of professor. This severely dents the IITs' existing flexible cadre system. Anybody worthy of a promotion can hope to get it and does not have to wait for a vacancy. The criteria for selection and career advancement are stringent and the process is above board.

The moot question is: why should the mandarins in the MHRD be laying down rules and regulations on how IITs should be run? Hasn't the IIT system, after five decades of successful evolution, become mature enough for the directors, deans and senior faculty members to manage the institution's academic, administrative and financial affairs on their own? Unfortunately, bureaucrats in New Delhi, with some good exceptions, think that they know everything and should control everything.

This kind of mindset, coupled with political interference, has done immense harm to once-great institutions like Air India and Doordarshan. It won't be surprising if IITs and IIMs go the same way after a couple of decades, if their already-limited autonomy is further jeopardised.

Strangely, the ministry's new norms run contrary to what Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh had said, while inaugurating PanIIT 2008, the three-day global conference of IIT alumni in December last year: "There are many reasons for the success of the IIT system. Among the most important is their autonomy, and I am firmly of the view that the IITs, like all other institutions of excellence, need to function in a more autonomous manner." Infosys chief mentor N R Narayana Murthy, one of the most famous IIT alumni, made the same point last month while inaugurating the golden jubilee celebrations of IIT Kanpur, his alma mater.

Kapil Sibal, the new HRD minister, is one of the brightest members of Dr Singh's post-election cabinet. He is trying to introduce new ideas and impart new dynamism into a ministry that, unfortunately, remained impervious to the philosophy of reforms under his two predecessors. The MHRD and regulatory bodies in the field of education still remain bastions of the licence-permit-quota raj. Sibal must de-bureaucratise the ministry's functioning, which is solely responsible for the fact that very few Indian universities and centres of higher learning rank among the best in the world. He has a golden opportunity to unshackle the higher education establishment in India and empower it to achieve ambitious national goals. Here are a few suggestions.

Self-governance is the norm followed by all the world-class universities, technology and management institutes, and other centres of higher learning abroad. Government should only provide funds, lay down norms for accountability and strict adherence to the social justice principle, set high benchmarks for timebound progress, and leave institutional governance entirely to the boards or senates of IITs, IIMs, NITs, universities, etc. For the purpose of evolving this new self-governance model, Sibal should initiate a serious dialogue with important stakeholders: eminent educationists, retired and current teachers, industry leaders and public figures who have served on the boards of educational institutions, and their alumni. The last category, in particular, can partner with the government in incredible ways. Look at the hyperactive Pan-IIT fraternity in India and abroad. It has shown itself to be ever ready to support the IITs not only financially but also by facilitating alliances with prestigious institutions around the world and importing best governance practices from them.

One of the chief objectives of this reform should be to develop a large number of new leaders in the education field, who will have the requisite competence, unfettered operational freedom and the fire in their belly to enable India to make the kind of breathtaking strides that China is making in higher education.

Source: New Delhi /indianexpress.com/27 September 2009

Professors must put in 40 hrs/week: UGC

Professors and all university teachers now have to clock 40 hours a week. Moreover, it's mandatory for

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them to be 'physically' available on campus for at least five hours a day.

The UGC has a fixed workload for lakhs of professors/assistant professors and all university teachers under the University Grants Commission (Minimum Qualifications for Appointment of Teachers and other Academic Staff in Universities and Colleges and Measures for the Maintenance of Standards in Higher Education) Regulations, 2009.

The commission ruled that the workload of university teachers in full employment should not be less than 40 hours a week and for 30 working weeks (180 teaching days) in an academic year. To promote research, every teacher must earmark a minimum of 6 hours per week for research activities. However, there is a relaxation of 2 hours in the workload for professors actively involved in extension and administration. These rules come into force immediately.

Meanwhile, there's a diktat for V-Cs too. No second-term, fixed tenure of five years and no holding office beyond the age of 70 and an 'integrity' report if the V-C joins another university. That's UGC's message to vice-chancellors of nearly 400 universities across the country. In fact, the UGC wants uniform regulations for V-Cs. Hitherto; different universities had different tenure and rules.

The UGC has decreed that the term of office of the V-Cs in all central and state universities will be five years. More importantly, there will be no second term in the same university. Another term as V-C is admissible in another central or state university subject to performance evaluation of the candidate by the search committee and credibility/integrity report from appropriate agencies.

The UGC has also laid down the selection process for V-Cs. A search committee comprising persons of national eminence through a public notification will come up with a panel of names. The committee must give proper weightage to academic excellence, exposure to higher education system in the country and abroad, and adequate experience in academic and administrative governance, and adopt a transparent process.

Source: Bangalore /timesofindia/30 September 2009

Proposed Reform in Higher Education by Yash Pal Report: A Critique

The Professor Yash Pal Report (YPR) makes right noises about many of the inherently self-defeating practices, ideas and notions that have been the 'ruling ideas' of India's higher education sector for the last four decades. The Report significantly persuades the existing university system and its ensemble of policy-makers, bureaucrats and teachers etc. to go for self-corrective measures that would redeem them from many a closure. As we go through the report, its frank and straightforward espousal of several unpalatable truths about Universities, IITs and IIMs engage the reader in a therapeutic introspection. Much of this introspection is also inspiring and enticing, as it takes one to a realm of hope, the hope of recovering the idea of University from the labyrinth of the insider's subversion. A careful reflection on every section of this first-of-its-kind Report shall unravel a depth of intellectual and practical resources that are presented to the nation in a spirited optimism of will and pessimism of intellect. In reconceptualising the idea of University, the YPR states:

You would notice that we are placing supreme importance on the character of universities. They must create new knowledge. Besides making people capable of creating wealth they have a deep role in the overall thinking of society and the world as a whole. This job cannot be performed in secluded corners of information and knowledge. (…) But narrow expertise alone does not make educated human beings for tomorrow. Indeed, speaking more seriously, one could almost say that most serious problems of the world today arise from the fact that we are dominated by striations of expertise with deep chasms in between. (p. 5, emphasis mine)

This itself is a reaffirmation of the Nehruvian vision of university as 'centres of humanism'. The report broadens this idea when it speaks of a holistic educational framework and substantial reduction of bureaucratic control. Seemingly, the Report raises serious concerns about the existing mechanisms of repressing both the seekers and givers of knowledge by disciplining them. The Report further takes a turn away from 'dead uniformities' that many of the present rules impose on universities, especially too many inspection and control by an overarching bureaucracy. The burden of University bureaucracy and its mis/interpretation of statutes, rules etc. act as a source of permanent ruination of any sense of justice that the universities are supposed to deliver to everyone. In sharp contrast to such a deeply ingrained culture of distortion in the normative framework of the universities, the YPR reminds us of the grounding values of higher education as a whole, which are autonomy and freedom of mind. It says:

The principle of moral and intellectual autonomy from political authority and economic power is ingrained in the very idea of the university. This autonomy ensures freedom in research and training and it is expected that the governments and the society would respect this fundamental principle. Teaching and research

have to be inseparable, because the task of the university is not only to impart knowledge to young people but also to give them opportunities to create their own knowledge. Active and constant engagement with the young minds and hearts of the society also implies that the universities are to serve the society as a whole, and in order to achieve this, considerable investment in continuing education is essential. (p. 9)

This represents the deeper malaise of overpowering intellectual freedom by the disciplinarian and personified authorities of the University system, who in turn are subjected to political and economic powers of the state and the corporate. The situation is such that the universities provide a soft site of marketing of ideas and knowledge products along with the space for legitimising reasons of the State. All these grow within the University at the cost of the very purpose for which it has been created. The YPR, for the first time in the history of post-colonial India, clearly spells out the ways and means of removing these burdens of bureaucracy, state and corporate. The Report substantially recovers the lost space of autonomy of universities by emphasising the specific sites of advantages and disadvantages of the higher education scene, namely, socio-historical and cultural specificity and local conditions. Wherever a University/ Institution moved away from this primary locale of knowledge, the report prescribes a return to its 'roots' from the higher levels of knowledge enterprise without lowering itself. (pp. 12-3) The Report indicates the impending task of a live interface between the local and the global, the success of which can be observed in the role of the university in devising new ways of understanding and action in relation to real world problems. This is the kind of post-deconstructive realism that the Report evinces in. The Report suggests a self-conscious breaking of the walls of narrow isolationist practice of learning, research and specialisation. It gives a paradigm statement toward such an objective when it says:

We can then look forward to the day when IITs and IIMs would be producing scholars in literature, linguistics and politics along with engineering and management wizards who would have substantial motivation for engagement with the local community, and the opportunity to use and enhance learning by solving real-life problems in their immediate environment. (p. 15)

The utopic contour of such an expectation is translated by the Report in practically realisable terms. The YPR recommended that the present state of erosion of democratic space1 needs to be stalled by refraining from issuing diktats and by engaging oneself in listening to 'other' voices. In fact, this aspect of the Report can be read as a silent recognition to responsible dissent within the system. A culture of consensus in every critical decision resulting into a seamless uniformity is critiqued in every recommendation of YPR.

Once again, the Report for the first time asserts the role of sufficient use of local data so that 'knowledge covered in the syllabus come alive as experience'. (p. 18) This is one of the crucial steps towards translating the vision of a holistic knowledge system that requires an integrative mechanism between disciplines, which can be achieved, as per the YPR, by learning from the real-life situations as well as by learning across disciplines. The syllabus should therefore be cross-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary, instead of merely being disciplinary. For the first time, the YPR affirms the role of foundational and basic disciplines that open up the minds of pupils to an art of synthesising and creativity, in sharp contrast to what has been a practice of selective mingling of disciplines on a narrow pragmatic basis. Rather, the YPR advocates a line of exposing students to 'work' and its 'performance' in a playful mode: being free from narrow constraints of the discipline, the student directly learns from various kinds of works and workers in order to return to both academics and society. Earlier reports laid stress on performative aspect of work and study to lead the students to the ultimate goal of honing skills for a job, while the YPR makes it clear that skills divorced from theoretical grounding would only lead to a mechanical ineptitude. It suggests redesigning of the curriculum by relating theory and practice and developing a line of thinking that suggests a return of professional education within the University system. For this, the University system must create enough space by developing the interfaces between various disciplinary frames and skill based institutes that would help removing isolation of professional education as well as steep inequities between rural-urban sectors. Setting up of a National Skill Development Council is appreciated by the Report and it further suggested lowering of entry barriers to students trained from professional and vocational institutions for facilitating upgradation of their skills at any stage of their career.

Apart from this large integrative and holistic paradigm of higher education, the YPR advocates a lot of institutional freedom and removal of top-down control. It takes a bottom-up line of educational thinking that could be put to use by a single and multipurpose seven-member National Commission for Higher Education and Research (NCHER) under an Act of Parliament. The YPR designs two steps for achieving this: subsuming all the bodies such as the UGC, ICMR, BCI etc. under one regulator and then

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reorganising the University system bottom-up by allowing the good quality affiliated colleges to become University in its own right. Other bottom-up measures include the freedom to design curricula to address various needs such as keeping the community abreast of the cutting edge, many-sided inter- and trans-disciplinary linkages with social and cultural environment. For reforming the whole system of higher education, the Report evolves a novel path of constituting only one regulatory body for the entire higher education that acts as a think-tank with the power of intervention for facilitating a self-correcting mechanism. The purpose of this kind of indirect regulatory role is to ensure the fullest autonomy of everybody within the system. The YPR spells out details of how both the regulator and the institution in particular is going to evolve the right perspective on any educational concern. The YPR states:

Co-ordination among agencies which have different views of knowledge and education and which tend to treat knowledge within narrow confines is extremely difficult, if not impossible. It would, therefore be necessary to have a single apex body in the field of higher education which treats all knowledge areas in an integrated manner and works towards convergences which overarching regulatory powers. Only such a body would ensure that there is a live and close interaction among cothinkers and co-workers and there is no dilution of any idea, which it has to suffer if made to traverse a bureaucratic maze. (p. 53)

In other words, the highest regulatory body would exercise its power by way of sharing and deliberating together with co-thinkers and co-workers. This is the exact opposite of the current top-down style of functioning of authoritative bodies that run diktats and decide unilaterally by a select coterie of experts. The YPR makes a radical shift from the current state of exercise of power that tramples differences of opinion by invoking arbitrary positional authority which gets sanctified under some Act of the legislature. Diktats from the MHRD or UGC rules the roost now as such orders and directives carry the weight of the system. The YPR lightens such bureaucratic feats that institutions suffer from. It states:

The National Commission for Higher Education and Research (NCHER) would perform its regulatory function without interfering with academic freedom and institutional autonomy. It would not take recourse to inspection-based approval method. From the current inspection-approval method, it would move to a verification and authentication system. As a matter of fact, we envisage universities and institutions to put out self-declarations mandatorily in the public domain for scrutiny. Universities are to be seen as self-regulatory bodies and the Commission is to be seen as a catalytic agency which is more interested in creating more and more space for the individuality of each university & protecting their autonomy. (pp. 57-8)

This aspect of 'individuality' of the institutions in terms of transparency and self-regulation would enable the Indian University to become more 'authentic' about itself, as it would play out its specific characteristics in the public domain. This is also a long-term vision for transforming universities into self-sustaining citadels of knowledge. This is what the YPR terms as 'recovering the idea of University', which essentially is directed at recovering the lost space of autonomy and creativity in both the areas of academics and administration. In academics, the YPR suggests the creation of 'virtual departments' that develop emerging thematic concerns of various disciplines and departments. (p. 59) At the level of administration an evolution toward self-regulatory and transparent mechanism that would ensure bottom-up participation of the faculty has been the mainstay of its recommendations.

In Lieu of a Conclusion:

The first thing that one notices in this ambitious plan for "Renovation and Rejuvenation of Higher Education" is an agenda for institutional autonomy, accountability, transparency and a suitable mechanism of delivery and reach out to all possible beneficiaries. This directionality to ideal goals of higher education could have been better contextualised by way of suggesting means and ways of democratisation of various decision-making bodies within the University/ Institution. Although the Report speaks of the minimisation of the freedom of the VCs vis-a-vis faculty members (p. 61), it does not spell out how this internal curtailment of freedom can be overcome. One concern that arises from the current scenario is the non-representation of elected representatives of teachers, students and non-teaching staff members etc. in the Board or Executive Council of a University/Institution. Most often, the Vice-Chancellor, even bypassing the Acts and statutes of the University indiscriminately decide on all crucial matters thereby reducing every other shade of opinion into a non-entity. That the Vice-Chancellors create their own bureaucratic mechanism to stifle academic freedom is one area of concern that the YPR does not speak of in so many words. The Report emphasises on the criterion for evaluation of teachers by the students, which is a highly debatable proposition. The thrust of the Report on self-regulation and the talk of 'formal procedures' against teachers in case a teacher whose 'feedback report remains poor in successive years' (p. 44) are absolute contradictions. It gives the impression that the teachers can be subjected to hire and fire in the service conditions and the concerned authorities in

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the University are empowered to do so. This may in a moment establish an area of tyranny within the self-reforming, self-regulating body of the University, as it strengthens penal provisions, which universities, as liberal and humane institutions, are by definition opposed to. In a country deeply divided in ideological, religious, casteist, tribal and other such divisive categories, any assessment would have these hidden parameters that can mar academic neutrality.

The YPR is also silent about the democratic rights of teachers and students, which is considered as an essential component of any idea of autonomy. Internal democracy in an academic institution is possibly the most important contributing factor towards protection of its autonomy against external interference. It would have been possible to connect academic excellence with the level of internal democracy in an institution, as this stands out as the most crucial parameter of autonomy in an institutional setting where the Vice-Chancellor's/Director's word most often becomes the last word on any subject. The Report seemingly disconnects the need for a representational democratic practice in running the affairs of an institution from its academic, financial and research objectives.

This disconnect calls for a little more introspection on some of the disparaging practices of the University system today. One example that comes to my mind is the disproportionate allocation of funds for construction of buildings, roads and communication hubs in comparison to purchase of books, journals and grant of scholarships. This is a recent phenomenon that most of our Central universities/institutions are busy in new constructions and projects for beautification as they have already become the haven of contractors and builders. The YPR could have laid emphasis on a separation of the regular duties of academic and administrative authorities from such engineering activities so that the tendency of financial mismanagement does not arise at all in public funded institutions. Many of the Universities and IITs and IIMs are busy sprucing up campuses to give them a five-star look, while academics and research wise, they do not make an equally outstanding mark.

Compounding such malaises is the random commercialisation of University services, starting from transport to health to photocopying facilities. The YPR could have suggested some checks and balances on such commercialisation. The YPR retains a neoliberal streak in it as its autonomy talk is not complemented by an idea of expanding the academic and administrative freedoms in the University in all possible ways. Minus this little loophole, the YPR promises to plug many a loophole that subvert and damage our institutions today beyond any hope of redemption. Although the Report is politically correct in bringing out the new ways of reconnecting the University with society, it falls short of addressing the crucial link between education and the political status quo.

Footnote

1. YPR observes the use of the University's official machinery to prevent peaceful debates between rival social forces that damages the institutional space for research and dialogue to a large extent. (p.16)

Mainstream, Vol. XLVII, No 41,

Source: /mainstreamweekly.net/26 September 2009

Sam Pitroda is all set to launch the second telecom revolution

Sam Pitroda wants to change the world, but he himself has not changed much. His trademark French beard and long hair have remained the same since the Vietnam War days when the US army was recruiting young green card holders for the war. "The US army recruited those who looked neat. I decided to wear my hair long and gave myself a hippy look so that the drafting officials were given the impression that I was a rebel," said Pitroda. He dodged draft.

Rajiv Gandhi recruited Pitroda for the telecom revolution in the 1980s. Under Pitroda, the Centre for Development of Telematics set up the first RAX (Rural Automatic Exchange) booth in Kittur, Karnataka, on July 21, 1986. Pitroda now plans to change the education sector in India. He is clubbing telecom with education, agriculture, rural employment and skill generation to launch the second telecom revolution. The National Knowledge Commission chairman has direct access to UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi.

Pitroda, who grew up in a poor Gujarati family in Orissa, realised early that self-help was the best option. His university barber was a chain smoker who often blew smoke on his face while working on his precious locks. This experience made him avoid barbers and trim his own locks.
Pitroda's fingerprints can be seen in education, innovation, science teaching, telecommunication and employment generation. That apart, he attracts the best of the world tech talents to India. Stephan Thieringer from the US and Anat Bernstein-Reich of Israel, founders of education software company Across World, are among Pitroda's discoveries.

On February 3, Pitroda, along with Nandan Nilekani, Dr Ashok Ganguly, Dr P. Balaram, Dr Deepak Nayyar and Dr Jayati Ghosh, crafted the Recommendations on School Education that provided a fillip to the

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legislation for the Right to Education. The 52-page document aims to overhaul school education and make it a launch pad for excellence in higher education.

The NKC was mired in controversy during the previous UPA government. Divisions on the issue of reservation and ideological differences led to veteran sociologist Prof. Andre Beteille quitting the council in 2006. During Pitroda's latest visit to India, the Indian Council of Social Science Research invited him to deliver the Vikram Sarabhai memorial lecture, which was revived when Beteille became ICSSR chairman.

Beteille does not praise the NKC's recommendations on school education. He says Pitroda is "wonderful" but is naive and does not understand how ground realities corrupt great dreams and projects. Said NKC member Jayati Ghosh: "Pitroda has a technology-proponent's view towards problems and lacks a social scientist's approach. He does not grasp greater historical processes."
Ghosh said five out of seven NKC members, including Pitroda, had government school backgrounds, and yet the NKC was for greater private-public partnership in education. But Pitroda says his critics are not thinking differently from him. He wants to reduce the dominance of the bureaucracy. "Our paper world was designed 60 years ago to keep people down," he said. "Bring all government paperwork into the mobile phone!"

Pitroda's radical governance might attract a global following, but his Indian critics are not satisfied. "Pitroda under the UPA must not bring classroom teaching to Twitter and Facebook," said Kavita Krishnan, editor of the CPI(ML) mouthpiece, Liberation.

At his own level, however, Pitroda is a bit of a Leftist. He says, if a designer is given the choice of designing a new slum in Dharavi or a Cartier wristwatch, he will choose the latter. "We have to change that mentality first," he said. Pitroda, who ate a live scorpion in China, should be able to digest his critics' sting.

Interview/Sam Pitroda, Chairman, National Knowledge Commission

I have some method in the madness

When in Delhi, Sam Pitroda often packs his day with more than 20 appointments apart from public functions. On one such day, he spoke with THE WEEK: Excerpts from the interview:

What is your vision on education?

At the NKC, we spend a fair amount of time on how to steer more students towards science and maths. We also work on how to develop opportunities of education-industries interface. We are also working towards creating more doctorates from Indian universities.

But your education vision has to face roadblocks.

At the end of the day, we find there are three fundamental challenges in education. The first one is expansion. We need to expand the education dissemination system. We need more schools and more teachers. The second is quality. Overall quality of education is pretty bad in India. We have to ensure that our graduates become usable to various sectors. The third is access. We have to ensure access to education to the poorest of the poor.

Your work is to connect telecom with rural governance, education & management. Is that part of your systemic scheme?

I believe the governmental system has to be geared towards systemic accessibility. I have seen the impact of education and access to technology on my life. I come from a poor, low caste family of Orissa. No one knows that my father was a carpenter. He had fourth grade education. But I became an engineer and a scientist. Access to education changed my life. When I learnt telecom, I realised access to telecom will be critical for a nation like India. Access to knowledge is essential for developing a large country.

Will India's future be a networked society?

India will require integration of technology, networks, broadband connectivity and probably the next telecom revolution. So, I have some method in the madness.

How do you plan to face the changed educational models?

Learning paradigms have changed. Education has to be relevant. Software providers can bring that model in. There are software that will educate teenagers through Facebook and Twitter.

You made the best of opportunities despite your modest beginnings.

I am not a very smart guy and I mean that. I was not the best student in class. But I got extraordinary opportunities in life and made the best of them. I come from an electronics background. In electronics, I saw fast changes. I moved with the fast change. Change was the advantage of electronics.

What were the values you were reared on?

My father, who had few means, was a Gandhian. I went to a boarding in Gujarat where life was totally spartan. The Mahatma's teachings were all we knew of.

What is your philosophy on technology?

I always worked on bleeding tech and not on leading tech. Bleeding tech demands a lot of time and energy.

A lot of my inventions took 15 years to materialise into products.

What is your position on reservation in institutes of higher education?

Let us not bitch about reservation any more. The Supreme Court has given its judgment.

What did your education teach you?

At the end of the day, you need discipline, analytical ability, respectfulness, ethical bent of mind and a creative approach to the world.

The education system has to ensure these five things. The education system in India does not teach these things any more.

Source: /manoramaonline.com/26 September 2009

Students, Teachers need to be Transculturally Literate, Expert says

The current generation of college students and teachers need to be as culturally fluent with people from different cultures as they are with their own, a soft skill that has become an essential part of life in the 21st century, a University of Illinois expert on teacher education says.

According to Mark Dressman, a professor in the department of curriculum and instruction in the College of Education at Illinois, the current group of college students will inherit a workplace where they will need to be prepared for "significant contact with the rest of the world."

To adequately prepare today's students for tomorrow's global economy, Dressman favors "transcultural education," which he defines as an experience that goes beyond the traditional rite-of-passage trip to western Europe.

"In addition to developing an identity as someone from a particular city, state or country, transcultural education focuses on getting students to start thinking of themselves as citizens of the world," he said. "It's a relatively new approach that is being applied across a number of fields, including education, nursing and business."

Dressman says that transcultural education is an approach to teaching and learning that is "dialogic and interdisciplinary" in nature. Rather than learn about other cultures from a distance, a transcultural approach moves students and teachers toward learning through direct engagement with a culture's members and its perspectives.

Ideally, transcultural education goes beyond traditional course readings and discussions to include students having what Dressman calls "a fairly profound and authentic experience of another culture, one they can't get in a course on campus, or even in a study-abroad trip to Europe, and one that requires them to communicate with others as co-equals."

For Dressman, a former Peace Corps volunteer who worked in Morocco, an authentic experience of "otherness" is one that takes students out of their comfort zone, broadens their cultural horizons and then returns them to their lives with an enriched sense of the scope and sweep of world events, and of how the U.S. influences – and, in turn, is influenced by – world culture and commerce.

Dressman already has plans to take a class of Illinois undergraduates to Morocco this spring. Students will follow eight weeks of study of Moroccan history, politics, language, culture and education with a two-week trip to Rabat, where they'll meet with students at a university, and Azrou, a small city in the Middle Atlas mountains, where they'll help high school students to prepare for their version of the baccalaureate exam.

"Any student who has an authentic experience of interacting with students from a Middle Eastern country is going to have a different view of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and U.S. involvement in western Asia," he said. "They're inevitably going to have a different and hopefully more informed perspective."

In these cash-strapped times, Dressman said that the Web 2.0 tools that are already an intimate part of students' everyday lives – e-mail, blogs and YouTube videos, to name a few – can act as an inexpensive force-multiplier.

"Online tools really can make the world smaller," he said. "If you take a few students somewhere and they take photos and videos of their experiences, they can share it with their peers and inform a broader range of students."

For the eight-week class on Moroccan culture, Dressman has created a social networking site -- http://studyabroadinmorocco.ning.com/ -- to promote and demonstrate transcultural teaching and learning, and to function as a virtual meeting space for educators interested in the subject.

Educating students to think globally about the shared problems that affect both the United States and the world at large is an essential first step to solving them, but Dressman said globally conscious teachers who can inspire their pupils to see beyond their own borders also are needed.

"From the point-of-view of teacher education, I think it's absolutely critical that we teach our teachers how to think and communicate from a global perspective,

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so they can teach students how to look at the problems the world faces through a different prism."

Dressman cites the worldly supporting cast assembled by President Barack Obama – including senior adviser Valerie Jarrett and Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner, all of whom have spent significant time living and studying abroad – to help solve the nation's problems and rehabilitate America's image in the world. As a boy, Obama lived for four years in Indonesia, and it was his cultured, worldly perspective that helped elevate him from the senate to the presidency, Dressman said.

But regardless of whether you're a politician or a teacher, Dressman said, you can't explain current events – terrorism, global warming and the current global financial meltdown – without bringing the rest of the world into the picture.

"I'm not an economist, but I think it's strikingly clear how closely the world's economies are linked and how interdependent we all are on each other," he said. "Teachers need to be able to raise those issues and give their students a much broader experience of the world."

Source: /sciencedaily.com/24 September 2009

The lost world

Will the secondary school system produce teachers competent to carry out and monitor the new assessment system?

Human Resources Development Minister Kapil Sibal has established that one does not have to wait for long before initiating change within the government system. What's more, he has shown that it is possible to meet a pre-determined target date for initiating that change. In about 100 days of the formation of the new government, Mr. Sibal has fulfilled one of the major promises he had made soon after taking charge of the human resources development ministry.

That promise was to reduce exam-related stress for schoolchildren by abolishing secondary-level examinations (at the end of Class X) conducted by the Central Board of Secondary Education. It has now been decided that from the coming academic year, students in senior secondary schools will have the option of not taking the Class X board examinations and instead may go in for assessment through a grade system.

Many state education boards may also fall in line as was evident from the views expressed by representatives of several of these state regulatory bodies at the meeting where Mr. Sibal put forward this proposal for discussion. In other words, many states in India will go without the Class X board examinations, conducted by either the CBSE or the individual state education boards.

Students in general are elated. Many parents are rejoicing over the end of what they describe as the "stress raj" in the Indian secondary education system. Schoolteachers are still to figure out what the change means for them. Educationists are thrilled that at last the secondary education system in India has begun paying the required attention to the need for overall multi-faceted development of a child, instead of merely focussing on his academic achievements through an annual examination.

Yet, rejoicing over Mr. Sibal's achievement may be premature. A grade-based system of round-the-year assessment of students on a variety of academic and non-academic parameters is certainly superior to a year-end examination to test the students' skills in just a matter of three hours. However, any change can make the desired impact only when the change comes along with necessary adjustments in the prevailing academic infrastructure and environment.

The CBSE system of evaluating a student based on his year-end examination may have many flaws. However, it has one major advantage. The system has almost perfected the technique of screening the students from an academic perspective. Once a student gets through that system, his academic credentials are in place to be tapped by institutions of higher education.

From the educationist's point of view, it is an incomplete system because it does not pay much attention to the student's long-term developmental goals or potential. The top 5 per cent of students emerging from the CBSE examination system are thus ready to be picked up by the best global institutions of higher learning. In any case, the students who make the grade in the current system are competent enough on their own to take care of their overall developmental needs.

What one needs to note, therefore, is that in one stroke Mr Sibal has done away with that time-tested system. The danger is that he has not yet put in place a functioning alternative system of overall round-the-year assessment of these students. Without an effective grade-based assessment system in place, there is every possibility of India's secondary education system losing the world it had created for itself, but without creating a new world that should replace it.

The chances that such a tragedy might strike India's secondary education system are real. For an effective grade-based assessment system, the evaluation mechanism has to be more decentralised. The

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assessment will have to be done largely in consultation with schools where the students are enrolled. We all know the general quality and competence levels of teachers in secondary schools. The grade-based assessment system is much more complex and difficult to implement given the various weightings that have to be attached to different academic and non-academic parameters.

The big question Mr. Sibal will have to answer is whether the secondary school system has the capacity to produce those teachers who will be competent to carry out and monitor the new assessment system. If the new system has to work, there is an urgent need for developing a teaching faculty that is capable of handling the new workload. Otherwise, as Matthew Arnold had lamented in a different context, Mr. Sibal may find that his existing system will be dead and the new one will remain powerless to be born.

Source: New Delhi /business-standard/23 September 2009

Three IIT- Kanpur professors chip in for India's lunar rover

Though the Chandrayan-I mission ended prematurely this August, work is afoot for the second mission and the scientists of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) who are working in the project have roped in the professors of the Indian Institute of Technology- Kanpur (IIT-K) for helping them in developing India's first lunar rover.

ISRO has asked the IIT-K professors to develop and test three major components of the lunar rover, which will be sent to moon in 2012 as past of Chandrayan-II.

Of the eight major components of the rover, the three components assigned to IIT-K include development and testing of computer vision-based autonomous 3D map generation system, kinematic traction control, and control and motor dynamics of the six wheels of the mobile robot.

While K S Venkatesh, the associate professor of the institute's electrical engineering department, is working on the visual navigation project, associate professor of mechanical engineering Ashish Dutta has been given the responsibility to develop and validate the kinematic traction control models.

Associate professor of the electrical engineering department Ramprasad Potluri is working on control and motor dynamics of the rover's six wheels.

All the three professors who were told to begin work in the project in March 2009 plan to complete their "assignments" by 2010.

"Under the visual navigation project, photographs of the lunar surface will be taken through a system of cameras installed in the rover," K S Venkatesh told The Indian Express. He said the cameras will also help in deciding the movement of the mobile robot. The visual navigation will provide 3D maps of the lunar terrain.

"Once the project is completed, we will test it on a prototype lunar rover at IIT-K and thereafter the technology will be forwarded to ISRO," added Venkatesh. The final testing and approval of all the components being developed by the IIT-K will be done by ISRO.

According to Potluri, of the six wheels of the rover, four can be driven and steered. The rest can only be driven.

"The six wheels will have 10 motors to manage the movement and steering of the lunar rover," he said, adding that the major challenge will be to bring a co-ordination between all the 10 motors.

The uneven terrain of moon is likely to act as a hurdle in the free movement of the rover.

Under the kinematic traction control models, IIT-K will be developing a sub-controller, which will correct the path of the lunar rover on the uneven terrain.

The project will not only help the wheels of mobile robot in maintaining the grip on the lunar surface but also prove essential in deciding the movement of the robot.

Source: Kanpur /indianexpress.com/28 September 2009

UGC, AICTE employees will be taken care of;Sibal

With the government set to replace the existing regulatory bodies like UGC and AICTE by an overarching body, HRD Minister Kapil Sibal has said the manpower in such institutions will be take care of.

"We have to take care of the manpower. We will move forward with the least pain possible," Mr. Sibal told PTI here.

The government is set to bring a bill for creating National Commission for Higher Education and Research as an overarching body, which will replace University Grants Commission, All India Council of Technical Education, Distance Education Council and National Council of Teachers' Education.

The employees of these institutions are concerned as to what will happen to them after the NCHER is set up. The UGC Officers Association has threatened the authorities to resort to agitation if they are not informed about how they would be accommodated after UGC is subsumed into NCHER.

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‘‘For any transformation, there will be some pain,” Mr. Sibal said.

The HRD Ministry has set up a taskforce to suggest on transition from the present regulatory system to the proposed system under NCHER. The taskforce is expected to suggest what should be done to the employees of these organisations.

Asked whether some of them would be given voluntary retirement, Mr. Sibal said, “I don’t know. We will see when we devise the system.”

Source: /beta.thehindu.com/28 September 2009

RESOURCE

ESIC to construct Medical College in Patna foundation stone ceremony held today

The Employees’ State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) will complete Rs. 600 crore project of constructing the ESIC Medical College at Bihta, Patna within two years and first academic session will start in 2013 in a time bound manner.

This was announced by the Union Minister of Labour & Employment Minister, Shri Malliarjun Kharge at Bihta near Patna today. He also said the ESI Corporation would keep on improving its services to the Insured Persons under ESI Scheme.

While laying the foundation stone of ESIC Medical College at the Ceremony, Smt. Meira Kumar, Speaker, Lok Sabha applauded the services being rendered by the ESI Corporation to the working class of the country. The Ceremony was presided by Shri Mallikarjun Kharge and the Bihar Chief Minister Shri Nitish Kumar was the Chief Guest at the function.

As a part of initiative for overcoming the shortage of medical manpower and improving the services in ESI Hospitals, ESI Corporation has undertaken a project for starting Medical Colleges, Nursing Colleges, Dental Colleges and training school for other para-medical staff in ESIC/ESI Hospitals. In the first phase, it is proposed to set up 11 Medical Colleges and 12 Post Graduate Medical Sciences and Research Institutes in the existing ESI Hospitals by ESIC.

The establishment of the Medical College at Bihta has great importance because this is the first Medical College Project of ESIC in Bihar. For this project, the State Government has allotted about 25 acres of land to ESIC. This Medical College will have the state of art design and facilities comparable to any modern Medical College in the country.

The Employees State Insurance Corporation has the largest team of medical and para-medical personnel in India and also has one of the largest medical infrastructures in the world. It has huge infrastructure of 144 Hospitals, 42 Hospitals Annexes, 1397 ESI Dispensaries, 1753 Panel Clinics, 795 Branch/Pay Offices and 51 Regional/Sub-Regional/Divisional Offices.

The ESI Corporation has also approved formation of Hospital Development Committee for each hospital, which will look after up-gradation of hospital facilities and its attached dispensaries. The financial powers have also been delegated to these committees.

Source: New Delhi /pib.nic.in/25 September 2009

Setting up of new National Institutes of Technology (NITs)

The Union Cabinet today approved setting up of new National Institutes of Technology (NITs). These new NITs will be established in Manipur; Meghalaya; Mizoram; Nagaland; Goa (which will also cater to UTs of Daman & Diu, Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Lakshdweep); Pudducherry (which will also cater to Andaman & Nicobar Islands); Sikkim; Delhi (which will also cater to Chandigarh) and Uttrakhand.

The process for setting up of these new NITs will start in 2009-10 with formation of their respective societies, constitution of their Board of Governors, appointment of Directors, etc. The admissions in these new NITs will be made from the academic session 2010-11 and NITs will start classes either in campuses taken on lease or temporarily in mentor NITs. Work for construction of campuses for these new NITs will also be initiated subject to the land being provided free of cost by the concerned States/UTs. The process of setting up will be completed over a period of five year.

The new NITs are being setup so as to cater to the needs of States/UTs which do not have NITs as of now. This will meet a long standing demand of these States/UTs. These Institutes will be covered under the National Institutes of Technology Act, 2007 making them institutions of national importance, which will ultimately help in addressing the aspirations of people especially of the North East region where 6 new NITs are to be established. The new NITs will be able to provide high quality education to many of the bright students from these States/UTs, as 50% of the seats are to be filled from the eligible students from these States/UTs. Many of the States/UTs where these new NITs are being opened, especially those in North East are lacking in national level technical institutions. This will bring such States of North East in the main stream of the technical education.

The new NITs will increase in output of high quality:

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(i) By producing engineering and science graduates in the short run and postgraduates and Ph.Ds in the long run;

(ii) By providing teachers for Engineering and Science subjects at College/University level; and

(iii) By developing Research & Development and Intellectual Property generation in Engineering and Science, in the long run.

(iv) The new approved NITs are categprized under two Schemes, as follows:

(a) Scheme "A" consisting of proposed NITs at Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Goa, which will also cater to UTs of Daman & Diu, Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Lakshadweep, Pudducherry, which will cater to Andaman & Nicobar Islands also and Sikkim; and

(b) Scheme "B" consisting of approved NITs at Delhi (which will also cater to Chandigarh) and Uttrakahand.

Each of the NIT under scheme A will be established at a cost of Rs.250 crore while each of the NIT in scheme B will be set up at a cost of Rs.300 crore. Total project cost is Rs.2600 crore. During 11th Plan the expenditure will be of the order of Rs.540 crore and for the year 2009-2010 expenditure will be of the order of Rs.50 crore.

Main beneficiaries will be the students from the States/UTs which at present do not have NITs as seats will be earmarked for such students in these NITs along with seats earmarked to be filled on all India merit basis.

Presently there are 20 National Institutes of Technology (NITs), located at Agartala, Allahabad, Bhopal, Calicut, Durgapur, Hamirpur, Jaipur, Jalandhar, Jamshedpur, Kurukshetra, Nagpur, Patna, Raipur, Rourkela, Silchar, Srinagar, Surat, Surathkal, Tiruchirapalli and Warangal. Seventeen of these NITs were earlier known as regional Engineering Colleges (RECs). These RECs were set up as joint and co-operative ventures of the Central and State Governments with an aim to meet the increased demand for technically qualified manpower. In 2003, the Seventeen erstwhile Regional Engineering Colleges (RECs) were rechristened as National Institution of Technology (NITs) and taken over as fully funded institutes of the Central Government and granted deemed university status. Subsequently, Bihar College of Engineering, Patna;

Government Engineering College, Raipur; and Tripura Engineering College, Agartala, were also converted into NITs in 2004, 2005 and 2006 respectively. NITs are governed by National Institutes of Technology Act, 2007 which came into force w.e.f. 15th August 2007. The NIT Act 2007 declares these NITs as institutions of national importance.

50% of the seats in NITs at Under Graduate level are filled from the eligible students of the State where the NIT is located. Remaining seats are filled on all India merit basis. However, Students of States/UTs which are not having NITs have complained being at a disadvantage, though this Ministry if compensating such States/UTs by way of allocating supernumerary seats in NITs. To address this problem, MHRD has proposed to set up new NITs, provision for which is available in the 11th Five Year Plan, so as to cater to the needs of non-NIT States/UTs.

Source: New Delhi /pib.nic.in/17 September 2009

UNESCO's Executive Board approves India's proposal to set up Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace & Sustainable Development as UNESCO Category-I Institute

India is poised to become the first country in Asia to have an UNESCO Category – I Institute, which will be named Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development. The Executive Board of UNESCO has approved India's proposal to set up a Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace & Sustainable Development as UNESCO Category I Institute. This approval was accorded by acclamation in the Joint Administrative and Finance Commission of the Executive Board at its 182nd Session, which was held on 18th September, 2009. This would be the first Category-I Institute of UNESCO to be established in the Asia Pacific region. At present, there are eleven UNESCO Categories-I institutes and except 3 of them, all are located in developed countries and none is located in Asia.

The proposal to set up Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace & Sustainable Development as UNESCO Category I Institute was submitted to UNESCO earlier this year. This proposal resonates with UNESCO's aims and objectives enshrined in its Constitution and mandate of building the defences of peace in the minds of men. The proposal in the name of the Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi, whose birthday is commemorated by the UN General Assembly as the International Day of Non-Violence, will help to spread UNESCO's message internationally.

The Union Minister for Human Resource Development, Shri Kapil Sibal had earlier met D.G. UNESCO Mr. Koichiro Matsuura on 9th July, 2009 this year and sensitized upon him India's keenness for establishing the Institute. During the meeting with DG, UNESCO, Shri Sibal had said that the proposed Category-I UNESCO institute will symbolize the rich

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heritage and values of peace and diversity that India stands for.

At the initiative of the HRM, DG UNESCO had sent two mission teams of UNESCO for appraisal of the proposal, who visited New Delhi from 25th to 30th June, 2009 and from 27th to 29th July, 2009 to discuss the various aspects of the proposal before its submission to the Executive Board for its consideration. Finally, the proposal was put up as a joint proposal of India and DG, UNESCO in the Executive Board Meeting on 18.09.2009.

The proposal was supported by a number of countries cutting across regional groups and adopted by acclamation. In fact, the Chairman of the Executive Board commended India and the Institute which when established "would belong to the whole world". The Chairman of the Board further stated "We are proud of India for bringing this initiative to the Board. We call upon the Secretariat to fully support this initiative".

Category – I institutes and centres are integral part of UNESCO and its governing bodies are either elected by the General Conference or appointed in whole or part by the Director General, UNESCO and report to the General Conference. These are governed by UNESCO's rules and regulations and are integral part of Organization's Programme and Budget. These institutes are designed to serve as centres of excellence and expertise in the area of specialization to Members States and to contribute to UNESCO's programmes, objectives and strategies. Having an UNESCO Category – I institute is considered to be an honour for any country.

The overall focus of the activities of the proposed Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace & Sustainable Development activities will be on fostering a culture of peace through education, promoting sustainable economic and social development and respect for human rights. The decision is being viewed as a historic one and reinforces India's key role in UNESCO and its leadership position in building the defences of peace in the minds of men.

The General Conference of UNESCO will formally approve the proposal in its 35th Session, which is going to be held from 6 – 23 October 2009 at its headquarters at Paris.

Source: New Delhi /pib.nic.in/23 September 2009

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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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