Entry to IITs: making the new system work

Let me first discuss the problems and then the recommended solutions. The first problem relates to the syllabus of Class X and that of the IIT entrance exams. The aim of education is to create a learning environment for students. If the exam pattern of IIT does not have minimum percentage of Class XI and XII syllabus, then there is no point in giving 40 percent weightage to board marks. The exam of Class X and that of the IIT entrance exams is to create a learning environment for students. If the exam pattern of IIT does not have minimum percentage of Class XI and XII syllabus, then there is no point in giving 40 percent weightage to board marks. The exam of Class X and that of the IIT entrance exams is to create a learning environment for students.

The second issue is that on the one hand we have introduced continuous comprehensive evaluation (CCE) up to Class VIII, with no child being failed, and giving the basic elements to every student. On the other hand, as the student steps into Class IX and moves up to Class XII, there is a sudden increase in academic pressure, which is quite demanding and leaves a child confused.

Up to Class X, our curriculum has been very student-friendly. No child can be detached as the board marks have become so wide and each aspect of the child's personality is appreciated and guided. Therefore, there is a sudden demand to test both in the Class X boards and the entrance exams. It may produce a large number of frustrated youth. If you have given挫折s to a child who walks for ten years, watching them grow, suddenly will only lead to a staggering guilt and a firm walk.

I feel the changes should start from Class X onwards and the curriculum should orient the child to various aspects of basic sciences and math, and build up the attitude. Class X can build upon Class IX syllabus, and Class XII should be completely exam-oriented and gel with entrance exams. Then, we can achieve our aim of giving dignity to the school curriculum, and also ensure orientation of a child towards IITs.

Inclusion of board marks for IIT entrance is to counter the growing influence of the coaching centres, but our present proposal, once put into practice, may turn out to be a double-edged weapon. First, the students will go for tuition to be thorough with the board syllabus, which was earlier neglected by their teachers. Second, they will go to the coaching centres for the IIT entrance as the pattern reinforces the same and these centres have set training modules with them for years.

It is obvious for teachers to notice the influence of perceptions of different authorities. The IITs do not want their hold to be loosened, the CBSE wants its own share, and the BSEB minister wants to revitalize the education system by bringing in these experimental reforms. But, last will not be out. The thought and the implementation will have to be continuous.

To re-emphasize, here are some specific suggestions to make Kapil Shish’s idea of Vivekananda’s True Test a success:

- As preparation to win a marathon starts some time in advance, similarly, changes in the curriculum to suit the IIT entrance should start from Class IX.
- Syllabus of Class XII should at least be 60% similar to that of the IIT entrance exam.
- To encourage coaching institutes, and to build confidence in students, the curriculum should be well spaced out, streamlined, and goal oriented.
- Empower the teachers at the senior secondary level by holding workshops, to keep them abreast with the latest policies and the expectations.

If we do all of this, I feel that the child will emerge the winner. It will also help the poor children who suffer as they cannot afford coaching centres. The new system will particularly give an impetus to the boys who normally outshine boys in Class XII exams.

The new AIEEE-AIEEE combi, with value to school marks, will offer more options to the students, and will also restore the standing of the school system. The school curriculum and the teaching faculty will now be expected more. The school board marks, and the creativity of a child, and the problem the teacher will be rewarded.

(Writer is teacher at Army Public School, Ambala.)

Vineet varma on personal
WOOING NITISH HRD ministry agrees to Nitish's demand for additional university in Motihari, apart from one at Gaya

2 Central Varsities for Bihar

OUR POLITICAL BUREAU
NEW DELHI
The Centre on Friday agreed to set up a central university in Motihari, in addition to the one proposed in Gaya, conceding to Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar's demand. "I have given the approval for establishment of a central university in Motihari and I am happy that the issue has been resolved," said human resource development minister Kapil Sibal.

The timing of the announcement was significant, as it has come just ahead of the presidential election, in which Nitish Kumar's Janata Dal (United), although part of the opposition National Democratic Alliance, has decided to support United Progressive Alliance candidate Pranab Mukherjee.

Work on the proposed university has been delayed by several months because of differences between the state government and the human resource development ministry over the location of the university. While the Nitish Kumar-led government had been insisting that it should be set up in Motihari, the ministry viewed Gaya as a better location. The ministry had also proposed to set up two campuses, as in the case of Himachal Pradesh, but Kumar rejected this suggestion.

While giving the go-ahead, the Centre said it would not provide additional funds for the additional university. The Rs 240 crore allocated as initial capital for the university will, therefore, have to be divided between the two varsities. The Central Universities Act, 2009, will now have to be amended to enable opening of two central universities in Bihar. The legislation has made an exception only in the case of Jammu & Kashmir.

Congress may have sensed an opportunity in the strained ties between JD(U) and BJP, the main constituent of NDA. Though Kumar has denied a lasting political deal with Congress, there are clear signs of a growing distance between him and BJP.

In an interview to ET last month, Kumar had virtually threatened to walk out of NDA if Gujarat chief minister Narendra Modi was chosen as the alliance's prime ministerial candidate. Although Kumar did not mention any name, the qualifications that he proposed for the NDA's prime ministerial candidate – someone with secular credentials, absolute faith in democratic values and without rough edges in his personality – made it clear that Modi was not acceptable to him.
Solar storm rising, to hit Earth today

Washington: A huge solar storm, the second major flare to erupt from the Sun in less than a week, has triggered a coronal mass ejection which is expected to reach the Earth on Saturday, scientists have claimed.

The powerful flare unleashed on Thursday sent a wave of plasma toward Earth at a speed of about 1,400 km per second and it’s expected to reach the planet by 5.00 GMT (10.20 India time) on Saturday. While it may spark a minor geomagnetic storm, power stations, satellites and astronauts need not worry, the scientists said.

“It erupted from Active Region 1520, which rotated into view on July 6,” NASA officials said in an alert. Active Region 1520 (AR1520) is a giant sunspot facing towards Earth. According to NASA and the Space Weather Prediction Center (SPWC) the sun storm registered as an X1.4-class solar flare which is more powerful than the X1.1 flare that erupted on July 6 from another giant sunspot known as AR1515, making this the strongest solar storm of the summer so far.

The sunspot region AR1520 could be up to 300,000 km long at its peak. It is about 50% larger than last week’s sunspot AR1515, solar astrophysicist Alex Young of NASA’s Goddard Space Flight Centre said. “It’s quite extensive,” Young said, adding that sunspots the size of AR1520 are normal as the sun nears its peak of its weather cycle in 2013. But while sunspot AR1520 may sound like a solar behemoth, it’s actually a modest sunspot, which promises more sun storms to come, Dean Pesnell at NASA said. PTI

Astronauts get a shield against solar storms

Scientists have claimed to have developed a system which can warn astronauts and air crew about radiation from solar storms nearly three hours in advance, giving them enough time to take protective action.

“If you’re in a plane flying over the poles, there is an increased radiation exposure comparable to having an extra chest X-ray you weren’t planning on,” says John Bieber, professor of physics and astronomy at the University of Delaware Bartol Research Institute. “However, if you’re an astronaut on the way to the Moon or Mars, it’s a big problem. It could kill you,” adds Bieber. PTI
It’s semester mode from now in Jamia

2 years after PG courses made the switch, UG courses will follow new system from this session

JAMIA Millia Islamia will adopt the semester system for all its undergraduate courses, beginning Monday. This comes two years after it switched its post-graduate courses to this system.

All admissions in this central university’s current session will follow the semester system, while the existing annual mode will be phased out in the next two years.

The university's media coordinator, Simi Malhotra, said Jamia wouldn’t face Delhi University-type difficulties in implementing the new system because “it does not have affiliated colleges”.

“All under-graduate courses have been re-designed over the past two years. Since our class strength is small, the changeover is likely to be smooth,” she said.

She said: “The semester system will be demanding for students and teachers. But this is how it should be.”

In the new system, students will have six semesters in their three-year graduation programme. Each semester will include 75 per cent marks for external assessment, class presentations and tests and 25 per cent for internal assessment — depending on the need and nature of each course in the nine faculties of the university.

Jamia shifted its post-graduate courses, including some in BTech and Architecture, to the semester mode in 2010. The courses and modules have been revised over the past year after consultations with experts.

Sources said the university gave itself two years to shift the undergraduate courses to semester mode because doing it simultaneously with its post-graduate programme “would have been difficult”.

Annual mode will be phased out in 2 years: Univ officials