IIT aspirants still in a bind

When the IITs and the central government reached a compromise last week on the proposal for a single national-level test, most stakeholders thought that was the last they would hear of the row. But key concerns have still not been addressed. Is this just the calm before the storm?

Pallavi Smart finds out

The ministry of human resource development proposed a single, national-level entrance examination for admission to engineering and technological institutes across the country—the IITs, centrally-funded institutes, and several private, aided and unaided engineering institutes.

The proposal was not received well by any of the IITs and other stakeholders, such as the faculty and students. It took some time before a number of petitions, seven online petitions, and IIT-Delhi and IIT-Kanpur petitions were submitted in June, 2012. The joint admission board of the IITs then drew up a compromise formula, which was approved by the IIT council and the Centre.

According to this new plan, the IIT joint entrance examination will continue to be conducted as in the past, and the advanced test, but there has been no mentioning on the basis of content comparison and overall score of examination. This will be the major advantage of the current system.

OLD WINE IN NEW BOTTLE?

Many parents argue that the new formula skirts key concerns. When the compromise formula was given the green light, many stakeholders thought that it was the last time they would hear of the row. But those who were planning to initiate a public interest litigation (PIL) in June, 2012, with the Help of an NGO, before the formula was drawn up and approved in July, 2012, saw little hope of success. "We were not actively involved in the IIT joint entrance examination," says a parent who has been preparing for the IIT joint entrance examination (JEE) for the last three years. Another parent is just as worried. "We are not sure how this new plan will be effective from next year, in which there will be entrance examinations of two levels—made and advanced. The main issue is going to be with the 'JEE Advanced.'"
IIT spot gets tougher for CBSE, ISCE students

NEW DELHI: Students from the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) and other select boards may face a tougher battle in seeking admission to the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) in 2013 than students from other boards.

A cap that will allow only the top 20% students from each board to be eligible for IIT admission tests would hurt aspirants from tougher boards, experts have argued. Students from the CBSE, Council for the Indian School Certificate Examination (CISCE), and the state boards of West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh may be worst hit. Many of them — who don't make it to the top 20% — would be as qualified as some of the top 20% students from easier boards, but will not be eligible for admission to the IITs.

The IIT Council had decided on new admission criteria from 2013, including the eligibility cap, arguing that students across all states were equally meritorious.

Although there is no evidence suggesting any difference in innate merit between students based on their board or background, students from some boards perform better than others in common tests, two independent studies have shown.

In 2009, Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bangalore, scientists PS Anil Kumar and Dilipakar Chatterjee compared the performance of students from India's 29 boards over 10 years in a common examination. The selection test for the Kishore Vaigyanik Protsahan Yojana (KVPY) is conducted by the department of science and technology each year to select the brightest high school science students, who are awarded a fellowship to pursue studies in the sciences.

Their results showed that the average score of students from the CBSE, CISCE, West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh boards in the KVPY test, a common examination unlike the Class 12 boards, in physics, chemistry and maths, exceeded those of aspirants from other boards. The results were published in November 2009 in Current Science, India's top science journal.

UNEVEN STANDARDS

TOUGHEST BOARDS
CBSE, CISCE, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh

EASIEST BOARDS
Bihar, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh

Source: Analysis of student performances by professors Anil Kumar and Dilipakar Chatterjee, IISc Bangalore
Breaking The Glass Ceiling

Higher education in India should not perpetuate inequality of opportunity

Yogendra Yadav

It's admission time again. Charming images of 'freshers' entering the campus and glossy advertisements of the universities we had never heard before hide the harsh reality of educational mortality from school to higher education. Elaborate coverage of rising cutoffs and entrance tests draw our attention to individual merit and luck. We tend to forget the overwhelming role of 'social luck' defined by the accident of birth. As and when we pay attention to inequality of opportunity, the focus is on economic condition. Media's overwhelming coverage of admission season masks the harsh reality of inherited group inequalities. Reservations get some attention. Recently a news report about entrance to the IITs mention that 1,403 students got admission under the scheduled caste category, only two dalit students could secure admission under general category. The figures also showed that if there was no reservation for the OBCs, the IITs would have had only 17% students from this social group that comprises around 45% population of the country. Official statistics did not reveal how many upper caste Hindu students make it to the IITs, but a simple back-of-the-envelope calculation shows that despite reservations, their share is anywhere between two or three times their share in population.

Caste however is not the only axis of inequality. Gender, religion, class, locality and region, not to speak of disability are some of the principal dimensions of educational inequality in our country. A quick look at Gross Attendance Ratio (GAR) for age group 18-22 years in the 66th round of National Sample Survey (2006-07) brings it out. GAR is measured as percentage of students who report attending a higher educational institution to the total population in age group 18-22 years. The overall GAR of the country in 2006-07 was 27.7%. In other words, of the 1,000 youth in the age group of 18 to 22, only 277 reported attending any higher educational institution.

Access to higher education for the disadvantaged social groups is substantially below the national average: the participation of women (23.2%) and OBCs (26.3%) as a whole was marginally below the national average. The figures were substantially lower for SC (17.3%) and SC and ST (16.1%) and even lower for Muslims (16.1%) and the scheduled tribe (14.2%). The strongest single factor is of course the economic condition. Among the lowest two quintiles of income distribution, the GAR was as low as 14.1% and 9.5%. As for the disabled, we can only guess that their situation is perhaps worse than any other category: for there are no official statistics on the number of disabled who manage to enter higher education. We do not have comparative data for subgroups such as the lower OBC, extremely deprived dalit communities such as those engaged in sanitation or particularly vulnerable tribal groups, or nomadic/DNT communities, but the non-official evidence suggests that their condition is much worse than that of the larger category to which they belong. Census figures show many communities like Mokhara in Bihar several nomadic communities and scavenging castes have barely one graduate in the adult population of 1,000. At 48.8% the GAR among Hindu 'general' category is thrice as high as among SCs and STs.

Learning can't be monopolised only by the privileged.

We tend to forget the overwhelming role of 'social luck' defined by the accident of birth. As and when we pay attention to inequality of opportunity, the focus is on economic condition.

The situation is compounded when an individual lies at the intersection of more than one axis of inequality. While the overall GAR for women stands at 23.2%, it is much worse for rural women (13.4%) and shockingly low for rural women belonging to the poorest income decile (3.8%). For men the GAR was 31.8%, for urban males 48.7% and for rural males in the richest income decile it was well over 100%.

We cannot expect that expansion of higher education will automatically reduce inequalities. Over the years, the access to higher education has improved for all social groups, but their relative disparities have not reduced substantially. While rapid expansion of private educational institutions has helped to meet the acute need for increasing the capacity, it has also accentuated inequalities by reducing the scope of state action in favour of the disadvantaged. The entry of unprivileged social groups has shifted the site of deepest imprint of social inequality from the lower end of higher education to its upper end.

How then does one address these stark inequalities in higher education? Experience of the past suggests three lessons. First, instead of just talking about inequalities, we need to pay careful attention to the various dimensions of inequalities and how they interact with one another. This would mean targeting subgroups such as scavenging and nomadic communities on the one hand and identifying groups that lie at the intersection of many inequalities, on the other.

Second, talk about equity must be backed by resources. In particular there is a need for a quantum jump in the volume, range and amount of student support measures like scholarship, stipend, assistantship and loans for disadvantaged students. Third, reservation needs to be supplemented by a range of smart equity designs such as a multi-dimensional index of disadvantage for students and a diversity index for institutions.

If these steps are not taken soon equity might quietly drop from our higher educational policy motto of "Expansion, Equity and Excellence".

The writer is a senior fellow at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies.
छह सौ नई यूनिवर्सिटी इस साल जुड़ जाएंगी एक-दूसरे से

देश की सभी यूनिवर्सिटी-उच्च शिक्षण संस्थान को आपस में जोड़ने के लिए शुरू की गई नेतृत्व नलीज नेटवर्क ऑफ इंडिया (एनसेपए) से इस साल 600 नई यूनिवर्सिटी-उच्च शिक्षण संस्थान और जुड़ जाएंगे। इससे ये सभी यूनिवर्सिटी आपस में अपने संबंध कवर्क और अनुभव को एक दृश्य के साथ बाँट सकेंगे। इस समय देश की 774 यूनिवर्सिटी-उच्च शिक्षण संस्थान इन नेटवर्क से जुड़ गई हैं। केंद्रीय यूनिवर्सिटी-टक्कनक मंत्रालय आईआईटी के दश शिक्षक पद्ध पाएं। ये ऐसी वर्तमान के धार्मिक होंगी जहाँ सवाल-जवाब भी किया जा सकेगी और छात्र अगर कुछ मलत चर्चा है तो हूँ बैठा शिक्षक उसे सी ठीक भी कर पाएगा। उन्हें बता दिया कि इस समय इन लिस्ट से नए विद्यार्थी भवन में बाहर आईआईटी के शिक्षक गुजरात में क्लास लेने रहे हैं। जब भारत आईआईटी हैदराबाद की, गोवर्डन आईआईटी जवाब की, दिल्ली आईआईटी रोडर में क्लास आयोजित कर रहे हैं।

चौबीस घंटे की सुरक्षा

Girls’ strength reaches 100 at IIM-B

Vanita Srivastava
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NEW DELHI: IIM, Bangalore, has attained a record of a special kind. For the first time in the history of the institute, 100 women have managed to get admission in the 2012-2014 batch.

Although the fairer sex constitutes only 26% of the total class strength of 377, this is a commendable achievement because the institute had been striving to improve its
gender ratio for the last three years.

"Internationally, the percentage of women in good management schools is 40-50%. We are still way behind. But this is a small step and we will strive to improve it gradually," Prof M Jayadev, Admission Chairman, told Hindustan Times.

Maintaining that no compromise had been made on merit, Jayadev said: "Besides the CAT score, weightage was also given to academic consistency and experience. When we decided on a comprehensive score, we took into account the overall potential of a candidate."

"Girls have always been academically consistent." Observing that the application of each candidate was scrutinised thoroughly, he said:
"During interviews, we looked for positive personality characteristics and intelligence."

Describing this as a great step towards improving gender balance, an alumni of IIM Bangalore said:
"When I was studying, there were around 10-15 girls on the campus. I am very sure the increase in the number of girls will bring more diversity on the campus."

While IIM Ahmedabad has this year admitted 64 students (16.64%) 51 girls (11%) have got admission in the two-year programme of IIM Calcutta.
Twinning programmes get breather from UGC rules

Kirtika Suneja

New Delhi, July 6: Close to a hundred twinning programmes — run jointly by a foreign education provider and an Indian institute — have received a breather from the government with the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) exempting them from the University Grants Commission (UGC) regulations of taking mandatory approvals from it.

As per the revised guidelines, degrees granted as part of twinning or collaborative programmes between Indian and foreign universities on foreign soil, will be recognised by the government. This is a great respite to almost 100 such programmes in the country which were under threat from UGC guidelines which, in an attempt to rein in fly-by-night operators who have set up shops in India, had made its approval mandatory for all collaborations between foreign and Indian educational institutions. Besides, it gave existing institutions six months to get approval.

"Twinning programmes are offered in collaboration wherein a part of the course is offered here and the rest in the respective country. They will continue to operate as it is, if they conduct their final semester and offer degrees on foreign soil," said a senior ministry official, without sharing the number of students who got a breather from this amendment.

As per a study conducted by the Association of Indian Universities (AIU), 631 foreign education providers were operating in the country in 2010. Of these, 440 were functioning from their home campuses, 5 opened their own campuses in India, 60 had programmatic collaboration with local institutions, 49 were operating under twinning arrangements and 77 had arrangements other than twinning or programmatic collaboration. The data compiled by AIU showed an upward trend in the Foreign Education Providers advertising in India from 144 in 2000 to 631 in 2010. In fact, all the twinning programmes are in MBA and hotel management courses only.

A twinning programme is one whereby students enrolled with a foreign education provider complete their study partly in India and partly in another educational institution situated outside India. "Foreign degrees will not come under our jurisdiction and hence, they can operate," the official added.

Out of the 440 foreign universities reported to be operating from their home campuses, 158 were from the UK, followed by 80 from Canada, 44 from the US and 43 from Australia, among others.

The UGC regulations came in the backdrop of the parliamentary standing committee’s report on foreign education providers which noted that out of the 60 foreign education providers having programmatic collaboration with local institutions, only 25 local institutions were affiliated to Indian universities or approved by regulatory bodies. Similarly, only 32 out of 49 twinning arrangements had the required approvals.

"What is more disturbing is that AICTE Regulations for Entry and Operation of Foreign Universities imparting technical education in India have failed to regulate the activities of foreign education providers dealing with technical education," the report added.
Two-day strike to protest against higher edu bill

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**MUMBAI:** Protesting against the Centre’s Higher Education and Research Bill, 2011, the Bar Council of Maharashtra and Goa will go on a two-day strike from July 11.

The bill, once passed, will allow foreign education institutions to set up their branches in India along with their independent syllabus, which would be completely different from the Indian standards. The institutions would also offer courses in law. At present, the bar council controls legal education in India. They believe that if the bill is passed in the monsoon session, the independence of legal professionals would be curbed and it will also affect the bar council. It would also affect the law colleges in the country.

According to the council, the bill would also alter the Advocates’ Act, 1961.

The bar council, under the chairmanship of advocate VB Konde-Deshmukh, has informed that it has appealed to the prime minister’s office, the law minister and other ministries of the central government seeking to withdraw the bill in its current form. The council also plans to hold a jail-bharo protest if the bill is not withdrawn.