Higher education survey to divide states into 10 groups

Kirtika Suneja

New Delhi, Nov 1: The first ever survey on higher education will reveal data based on the division of all states into 10 different groups on the basis of geographical contiguity and the number of available institutions within the state.

For the purpose of organizing the training and supervision of the field work, the ministry of human resource development has proposed that for each group of states, a supervisor may be recruited to monitor the field work in the states within the group. “In addition, at the central level, a team may be constituted by the task force for overall guidance and facilitating the main survey,” according to the pilot survey.

Further, all the institutions of higher learning in the country have been divided into three categories. While Category one is of university and university-level institutions, the second category is of colleges and institutions affiliated to universities and the third category is of institutions not affiliated to any university or stand-alone institutions.

More than 35 states and union territories have been put in 10 different groups, stating the number of affiliating universities, colleges, stand-alone institutions. According to the ministry, the existing data base on higher education is inadequate and out of date and the collection and dissemination of data on higher education suffers from incomplete coverage and inordinate time lag.

“Due to this, gross enrollment ratio (GER), which is being calculated on the basis of available data, does not reflect the correct picture of the country’s development in respect of higher education sector,” says the ministry which has set a target of increasing the GER from the present level of about 12% to 15% by the end of Eleventh Plan and to 30% by 2020.
STANDARDIZING PROCEDURES

IIMs to meet Sibal, seek more autonomy, admission reform

BY PRASHANT K. NANDA
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NEW DELHI

Seeking more autonomy in financial and administrative matters, the chairpersons and directors of the 13 Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs) will meet human resource development (HRD) minister Kapil Sibal on Wednesday.

Issues such as standardizing the admission process and improving research output will also be on the table during the meeting, which will take place in the wake of a report on reforming the IIMs submitted by a panel led by Maruti Suzuki India Ltd chairman R.C. Bhargava.

"The autonomy issue will be a major discussion area," a ministry spokesperson said. "Mr Bhargava is expected to give a presentation on the issue."

The report, submitted in October 2010, says leading business schools need to hire directors with experience of working abroad, alter their designation and profile, restructure the board of governors, and source funds from corporate houses in return for certain incentives.

Directors should be given more administrative and financial powers, like the heads of corporations, and their designation should be changed to president-cum-dean, says the report. "Not only would this be in line with the designations prevailing in leading business schools, but would enable the organizational structure to have vice-presidents and vice-deans," it says.

The Bhargava committee noted that global business schools are showing interest in setting up shop in India. "Private investment in management schools is growing rapidly, and the ministry of HRD is keen on attracting foreign direct investment in education, which could include joint ventures. This will pose new challenges to the IIMs," the report states, Mint had reported in October 2010.

Narayanan Ramaswamy, executive director for education practice at consulting and auditing firm KPMG, said autonomy for leading business schools is the need of the hour. The government should not interfere in their administrative matters as the IIMs themselves teach administration and management to the corporate world, he said.

The meeting will take place in the wake of a report submitted by a panel led by Maruti Suzuki chairman R.C. Bhargava.

The meeting will also discuss a proposal to hold common counselling, group discussion and personal interviews of admission seekers after the Common Admission Test (CAT).

Six recently opened IIMs—in Ranchi (Jharkhand), Rohtak (Haryana), Raipur (Chhattisgarh), Trichy (Tamil Nadu), Kashipur (Uttarakhand) and Udaipur (Rajasthan)—have already decided to do this to reduce hassles for students. But the seven older IIMs—at Ahmedabad, Bangalore, Kolkata, Indore, Lucknow, Kozhikode and Shillong—hold independent sessions.

"The new IIMs have agreed for the common process," said P. Rameshan, director of IIM, Rohtak. "Let's see what the meeting decides. The older IIMs are established brand names and it will benefit us if they too join us."

Himanshu Rai, a professor at IIM, Lucknow, and the convenor of last year's CAT, said students prefer giving separate interviews to enhance their chances of admission. "If they do badly in one interview, they still have a chance in the next," he said. "I have not come across a single candidate who is ready to endorse the idea."

The human resource development ministry is in favour of a common interview to obviate the need for students to run from one IIM to another, a ministry official said on condition of anonymity.

One proposal to make the system more uniform is to have a representative from each of the 13 IIMs on a common interview panel, where they can select students of their choice.

Nearly 206,000 students are vying for about 3,300 seats at the 13 IIMs this year.

PTI contributed to this story.
Joint counselling on IIM meet agenda

Akshaya Mukul | TNN

New Delhi: Meeting of chairpersons and directors of IIMs on Wednesday would take up the issue of common counselling for admission to the institutes.

To be chaired by HRD minister Kapil Sibal, the meeting would also discuss the publication of proposed IIM Business Review on the lines of the Harvard Business Review. Besides, Sibal would take stock of progress on the establishment of six new IIMs.

The substantive issues would be amendment in the memorandum of association of IIMs and related issues like the size of board of governors, accountability of board, selection process of directors and chairpersons.

All the IIMs have amended their MoAs that have been sent for approval to the ministry. A clearer picture would emerge after the meeting. The issue of IIM-Indore offering a five-year diploma course has been cleared by the ministry, but on the condition that the institute cannot offer a degree. “A degree cannot be given by IIMs. We have made it clear to IIM-Indore,” sources said. The contentious issue of number of teaching hours in IIMs is on the agenda. “In many IIMs, faculty is protesting against 160 hours of teaching annually. Even time spent on research gets factored in this.

“The protest is misplaced and needs to be sorted out. It has been found that faculty feels 160 hours of teaching would get in the way of their consultancy work,” a source said.

IIT-B, Amity bid for campuses in New York

The Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay and Noida-based Amity University are among 15 institutions worldwide that have submitted bids to the city of New York to set up a science and engineering campus in the city under a plan by Mayor Michael Bloomberg to drive local economic growth and create jobs. The city received seven proposals from a total of 17 institutions. PTI

Govt to connect higher education institutes

572 universities, 25,000 colleges and 2,000 polytechnics will be networked to promote the use of technology

By Prashant K. Nanda
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At least 15 million college students pursuing higher education will be able to share information, lab experiments and classroom content as the Union cabinet on Tuesday approved a proposal to connect 572 universities, 25,000 colleges and 2,000 polytechnics as part of its mission to promote technology usage in higher education.

This approval will launch the National Knowledge Network, promoted by the erstwhile National Knowledge Commission, and the National Mission on Education through Information Communication and Technology (NMEICT).

With this, all colleges and universities can hope for seamless connectivity that will enable e-learning and enhance e-content reusability and sharing of best practices.

“The ultimate target is to provide last-mile connectivity and provide high-quality e-content to be used with the connectivity being provided to the universities and colleges across the country,” Andisha Sonti, Union minister for information and broadcasting, said after a cabinet meeting.

In colleges and universities with Internet access, the technology will be upgraded to optical fibre cables from copper wire-based connectivity, the cabinet note says. Every institute will have a “prioritisation of 600 nodes of LAN (local area network) on an average.”

Initially, the government has approved connecting 18,000 colleges and 419 universities. The addition of polytechnics is a part of the government’s push to promote vocational and skill education to bridge the demand-supply gap for efficient human resources in the country.

The government has not specified the amount to be spent on the initiative.

Since 2009, only 11,600 colleges have got Internet connectivity—a success rate of 47%, according to data from the human resource development ministry. States that have benefited include Karnataka, Punjab, Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

Once seamless connectivity is established, students will have complete access to the e-content being generated under NMEICT.

Several hundred hours of lectures of Indian Institute of Technology professors will be available for free.

Human resource development minister Kapil Sibal had said the device ‘Aakash’ will help eliminate digital illiteracy, but the country needs high-quality study content to be made accessible to students online.

Private universities say the move is a good step, but Internet connectivity and e-content need to be integrated for students to benefit.

Aman Mitra, deputy director at Punjab’s Lovely Professional University, said the facility is unlikely to be free.

“This is a good step as students and professors can now access a lot of information available outside their own campus. But what is required is to boost the e-content repository and clear framework on how to use it better,” he said.

“Not anyway, availing IT lectures will be of help to students. Colleges and universities that have already adopted technology will benefit more, he said. “But I believe there should be some agreed framework on the usage. If a lecture series is happening at any IIT or a leading varsity, we can benefit if there is some broad agreement on content sharing.” India has some 130 private universities, according to official statistics.
Student suicides up 26% in 4 yrs

Anahita Mukherjee | TNN

New Delhi: Here's a compelling argument for education reforms in the country: student suicides increased by 26% from 2006 to 2010, with metros Bangalore, Delhi and Mumbai having most victims, in that order. And this is just the official data.

While 5,857 student suicides were reported in 2006, the figure jumped to 7,379 in 2010, according to data released by the National Crime Records Bureau. In other words, 20 students killed themselves every day in 2010, something both academicians and mental health professionals blame on a flawed education system where performance pressure ranks above all else.

‘Exam, job pressure’, P 13

New Delhi: A flawed education system and rising pressure of exams and employment is behind the surge in number of students committing suicide, academicians and mental health professionals feel. Figures released by the National Crime Records Bureau show a 26% jump in numbers in 2010 compared to 2006. For the first time in the past five years, Maharashtra recorded the largest number of students killing themselves, followed by West Bengal. Over the past decade or so, the two states have only interchanged positions in the top, a phenomenon unexplained by even educators. Delhi, as a city, alone accounted for 133 deaths in 2010, while as a state, it accounted for 166 deaths.

“An examination system and the selection process for institutions of higher education weigh heavily on young people,” says Shyam Meenoo, vice-chancellor of Ambedkar University in Delhi. “The volume of students passing out of the school education system and vying for admission to tertiary education has dramatically increased over the years, with levels of competition increasing too. At a time when higher education can result in social mobility, the stakes are very high. Today, there is a greater link between employability and higher education.”

Meenoo believes changes in the education system over the years reflect the changes in the Indian middle class and their high aspirations, which push young people to perform or perish. Psychiatrist Dr Sunjay Chugh feels the NCRB data is the most reliable evidence that things are only going from bad to worse in the Indian education system. Chugh blames a myopic education system for forcing students to learn what they may never need in life. “Why do we expose our children to such nonsense, with examinations becoming a ‘do or die’ situation where students need a minimum percentage to get into a halfway decent college,” asks Chugh.

An inadequate system, coupled with lack of proper social support, pushes students over the brink, says Chugh. “If a child’s parents do not add to the pressure that the education system puts on him, chances are his stress levels will never cross the threshold for suicide,” he adds.

Professor Arunabha Desai, former chairman of the University Grants Commission, points to the lack of quality education institutions in the country, with the result that there is a great deal of pressure to perform at critical points of a student’s life, such as board exams. When it comes to student suicides, Desai feels the situation is not being addressed by Centre or state governments.
IIT-Mumbai, Amity bid for engineering campuses in New York

YOSHEA SINGH
Press Trust of India

THE Indian Institute of Technology, Mumbai and Noida-based Amity University are among 15 institutions worldwide that have submitted bids to the city of New York to set up a science and engineering campus here under a plan by Mayor Michael Bloomberg to drive local economic growth and create jobs.

The city received seven proposals from a total of 17 institutions.

Name of the institute selected to set up the engineering and applied sciences campus would be announced in January after an extensive selection process that will choose a project which generates the greatest benefit to the city and its taxpayers.

Bloomberg had in July this year invited proposals from universities, institutions and consortia to develop and operate a "new or expanded state-of-the-art" campus in the city dedicated to engineering and the applied sciences. The proposals submitted contain plans for new facilities ranging from 400,000 square feet to over two million square feet.

The institutions propose private investments of more than $800 million in the first phases of their projects and this could be increased to $2.5 billion. Proposals feature plans for new labs, classroom and research space, new public open space and space for companies that will spin out from those institutions.

The new campus would focus on areas of information technology, digital media, sustainable urban growth, electrical engineering, public health, genome sequencing and computer science.

In addition, it will help create more than 30,000 permanent and construction jobs for New Yorkers at a variety of skill levels, and roughly $1.2 billion in direct and indirect taxes for the city. The proposals will be evaluated by the city as well as an advisory committee over the next several weeks.

Once selected, the institution will be expected to comply with deadlines and other requirements related to construction timelines, number of enrolled students and dedicated faculty members as well as establishment of applicable academic and research programmes.

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IIT-Mumbai, Amity submit bids for engg campus in New York

New York, Nov 1: The Indian Institute of Technology, Mumbai, and Noida-based Amity University are among 15 institutions worldwide that have submitted bids to the city of New York to set up a science and engineering campus here under a plan by Mayor Michael Bloomberg to drive local economic growth and create jobs.

The city received seven proposals from a total of 17 institutions.

Name of the institute selected to set up the engineering and applied sciences campus would be announced in January after an extensive selection process that will choose a project which generates the greatest benefit to the city and its taxpayers, Bloomberg said in a news conference here.

The winner of the "Applied Sciences NYC" initiative will get incentives like free city land and as much as $100 million in capital for the project.
IT and engineering graduates have to handle everything from programming and designing apps for mobile phones to developing software for space vehicles and sci-fi films.

There is a huge demand for computer science professionals, and the field is evolving rapidly. New technologies and industries are emerging, creating new opportunities for professionals in the field.

In Delhi, there are many opportunities for computer science professionals. The city is home to many tech companies, startups, and research institutions, providing a vibrant environment for learning and growth.

For computer science professionals, the future looks bright. With the increasing demand for technology and innovation, there are many opportunities to make a significant impact and contribute to the growth of the tech industry.

The future is here, and the opportunities for computer science professionals are endless. With hard work and dedication, anyone can achieve success in this field.
GET THE RIGHT SKILLS

Out of a population of 600 million youth below 25 years of age, 320 million are in schools and colleges. Surprisingly less than 25 per cent are employable due to the skills gap. AMIT BHATIA tells you more about this gap and what one can do to reduce it.

KNOWLEDGE & SKILLS

Employability skills can be divided in three areas of learning: Knowledge is theory or technical understanding of a subject, the ability to comprehend, apply, analyze, synthesize and evaluate to arrive at solutions. Knowledge plays an essential role as a foundation, the basic building block supporting Skills and Attitude. Knowledge is what one knows, like technical designs, software languages, statistical programming or financial modeling.

Skills move a person from theory (knowledge) to practice. To be employable, one must be able to undertake a task with competence. Skills are learned and replicable. In short, skills are what one can do with knowledge, for example, presentation, sales, management, communication, etc.

Attitude is receiving and responding to the environment and people; it is the value a person attaches to others, situations or environment. Attitude plays a frontline role and is a major driver for converting one’s potential into reality. In short, attitude is how one behaves: for instance, motivation, teamwork, confidence, etc.

Together, knowledge, skills and attitude provide a platform for a winning and successful career.

HOW ARE STUDENTS TRAINED?

Employability skills are not taught. They are learnt. At the under-graduate or post-graduate level, the andragogy (not pedagogy) is experiential training (not teaching). Adults don’t change behaviours because they are “taught”, only when they “experience” its virtues and are convinced about the new set of behavior or attitude. They have to be internally inspired, not externally motivated. This learning is problem-centric, not content-centric.

This training is fundamentally different from academic teaching. India still has enough to catch up on “project-oriented” or “activity-based” academic learning from blackboard-and-chalk based role learning that the same teachers are unlikely candidates for training students in an experiential format. This has to be left to expert trainers who often have clinical psychology (for soft skills) or speech pathology (for communication skills) backgrounds.

The training is mostly role-play or game-based and does not have much “theory”.

It has takeaways from experiences, which are very person-alised and become each individual’s learning. Consider topics like positive attitude and confidence, time management, conflict management, emotions from teaching, good writing, communication skills, dealing with difficult colleagues, managing expectations, teamwork, grooming and etiquettes, etc. You can’t help but train students through professional trainers.

Our academics often fall into the classic trap of finding a book in these subjects and use traditional teaching methodology in the classroom? The result: 25 per cent employability. Training is not teaching.

Our education system’s re-nunciation will lie in academic’s self-realisation that we cannot leave employability skills to accidents. This is exactly what employers want.

WHAT EMPLOYERS WANT

If most employers valued degrees, they would not host aptitude tests, group discussions and personal interviews. McKinsey, world’s leading day 0 employer across the world, for many decades, looks at problem solving, leadership, communications and presence.

Every time I make educators and business leaders fill up a survey, I am not surprised that the Top 5 priorities of both for a student’s future are different. This is the industry-academia gap.

Educators rate technical skills at the top. Business leaders frequently rate communication skills at the top. When will the twin meet? Our nation’s demographic dividend, albeit our future lies in ensuring our youth is put to work. Students seeking admission to institutions of higher learning should stop buying degrees, infrastructure or placements. Instead, they should demand comprehensive learning, including employability skills.

More importantly, educators must think about employability skills as a shift from teaching to training, from after-thought to proactive action, from discretionary indulgence to mandatory, embedded curriculum.

(The writer is founder and CEO, Aspire Human Capital Management)
IMA not to endorse govt’s 3.5 yr med course

Koushika Sinha

New Delhi: A day after TOI reported on the Union health ministry’s plan to roll out the 3.5-year medical degree, the Indian Medical Association (IMA) asked the Medical Council of India (MCI) not to compromise on patients’ safety.

Reacting to the three-week ultimatum given by Union health minister Ghulam Nabi Azad to the MCI, the BRM (Bachelor of rural medicine) national president of IMA Dr. Vinay Aggarwal on Tuesday said the MCI would not bend before the government and refused to endorse the course. IMA called for more debates ahead of falling in line with the government’s directive. “IMA is willing to cooperate with the government to find a solution on rural health,” the letter said.

It added, “There are better ways to overcome the shortage of modern medicine professionals in rural areas. Lowering the standard of medical education and producing low-quality professionals is not the solution.”

Dr. Aggarwal said, the MCI is mandated to uphold certain standards and cannot be bullied. “It is duty-bound to consider patient safety and cannot obliviously reverse a process initiated by the Bhoore Committee report of 1946 to abolish such mediocre short-term courses,” IMA says it is not convinced about the government’s intentions on BRM.

“The notion that over 30% of primary health centres do not have a MBBS doctor is not supported by statistics. Only 5.3% of PHCs are without a qualified doctor.”