Confluence 2011 organised at the Department of Management Studies
Continuing the tradition of providing its students a platform to interact and learn from some of the most eminent personalities of the contemporary industrial world, the Department of Management Studies, IIT Delhi, recently organised its flagship event, 'Confluence: The Idea Series 2011'. A two-day event, Confluence 2011 was divided into two sessions each over two days on finance and HR. The topics of discussion on day one were “AA+ Passing Perception or Failing Grade” and “NBFCs: Reshaping the Indian Financial Sector”. On day two, the topics of discussion for the two sessions were “The Demise of Lifetime Employment” and “Challenges of Multi-Generational and Multi-Cultural Workforce Integration.”
26 student suicides in 3 yrs at premier institutes

Tribune Special

Aditi Tandon/TNS

NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 25

"Why should we torture them now when we didn’t torture them 15 years ago?" KS Venkatesh, professor of electrical engineering at IIT Kanpur, quips when asked what was driving students to suicides in the premier institutes of India.

Between 2008 and 2011, IITs, IIMs and National Institutes of Technology (NITs) together reported 26 student suicides; 16 of these at IITs alone and seven at NITs. This Friday, IIT Kanpur saw the fifth suicide in the last three years; the 10th in its entire history. After scribbling a telling note – "I am tired of IIT!" – across his hostel room wall, 18-year-old Mahab Ahmed ended his life by hanging from a ceiling fan.

Venkatesh, who studied at IIT-K and now heads its faculty association, mourns the terrible reality of students succumbing to academic pressure, but attributes much of this stress to rising expectations of parents and JEE's mechanical coaching. The coaching trains students to crack entrance exams, but fails them when it comes to the real challenge of being an IITian which involves thinking and innovating.

"I trace much of this to parents who torment their wards for not scoring the top 9 grade. Even during the counselling sessions with JEE crackers, parents ask us what their child’s starting salary would be were he to consider a particular branch. They behave like customers, asking us to show their child’s worth. Naturally, students too no longer come to us for the love of learning. They basically come to make money. It’s time parents start telling children to do as well as they can, not as well as they must," says Venkatesh.

He also warns of growing depression among M Tech students who stay on for research instead of jumping into jobs after four years of graduation. Eighty per cent IIT suicides in the last three years have involved undergraduates UGs. Causes of stress vary as an IIT Delhi student explains, "The first year is tough as you are getting to absorb the system where professors naturally demand performance from you. That’s the nature of IITs. The stress of scoring is the highest in the first two years. In the final year, peer pressure is at its worst as you face the fiercely competitive campus placements. Here top scorers are major gainers; hence the pressure on low scorers."

On May 2, an M Tech student from IIT Madras, Nitin Reddy, committed suicide after being asked to repeat a course in the final year. This twisted the job he had landed. IIT Madras later concluded that Nitin was depressed, but his father approached the National Human Rights Commission for justice.

UB Desai, Director of IIT Hyderabad, say the systems in such as counselling units - are in place, though more psychologists are needed. The institutes also appoint faculty advisers for fresher to help them understand the new place. But all this has not always helped. In IIT Bombay, for example, the counselling unit failed to identify regular visitor Srikanth Malapalla (21) as a depressive. He later committed suicide.

Alarmed by the surging cases, IIT Council recently decided to set up a taskforce of directors to study the problem which Prof Sanjay Dhande, Director, IIT Kanpur, describes as a "social scourge". He wants the media to stop glorifying the IITs and NITs as the only quality institutes. "Turn the arch lights to other unsung institutes; ease the stress on IITians," he appeals, asking parents to tame their expectations.

"Students must also realise they now have more freedoms without responsibilities. There are distractions like cell phones and the internet. These issues require introspection considering changing moral values and lifestyles," he says.

An IIT-K panel constituted to look into the spate of suicides had earlier suggested an end to single-room hostel occupancy system and suggested that students share the rooms. They also said ceiling fans should be replaced with pedestal fans and internet speed should be reduced to prevent unhindered web access in the institutes. The logic given was constant Internet use left students too tired to concentrate on lessons.

The new taskforce, directors say, will give fresh suggestions. Meanwhile, the IIT faculty admits they have been unable to attend to students the way they used to. Since 2007, the intake at all central educational institutes increased manifold following the 27 per cent mandatory OBC reservation. "At IIT-K, the student teacher ratio used to be 8:1. It is now 16:1," Venkatesh explains.

In a lighter vein, he even suggests that ragging must be allowed in small, decent measures to ensure that seniors talk to juniors and inter-personal ties build. "Look at our students today. Each one is an island, each one a loner," he says.
Casting software from NIIST, IIT start-up

Our Bureau
Thiruvananthapuram, Sept 25
Scientists at the National Institute for Interdisciplinary Science and Technology (NIIST), Thiruvananthapuram, has joined hands with 3D Foundry Tech (3DFT), a company incubated in the Indian Institute of Technology-Bombay, to develop an advanced software for the metal casting industry.

NIIST is an affiliate laboratory of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR).

CASTING SOFTWARE
A new module named 'FLOW+' will incorporate the 'solver' of the virtual casting software developed at NIIST, an official spokesman said here.

The solver can perform coupled simulation of metal flow and solidification, enabling visualisation of mould filling sequence, changes in casting temperature and solidification rate.

This helps in predicting casting defects such as ‘cold shut’ and shrinkage porosity without shop-floor trials, saving valuable time, energy and other costs.

FLOW+ will be a new module provided by AutoCAST-X, currently the most popular casting software in India with about 60 licensed users in academia and industry.

GEOMETRIC REASONING
AutoCAST-X is based on a geometric reasoning engine developed at IIT-Bombay, allowing semi-automatic design, 3D modelling and analysis of casting elements like cores, feeders, and gating channels.

The software is currently maintained and marketed by 3DFT.

At present, the Indian foundry industry loses over Rs 2000 crore every year in shop-floor trials for new castings and rejections in production castings.

This can be saved by computer simulation and optimisation of casting designs.
Want to partner Indian varsities, not compete against them

University of New South Wales (UNSW), Australia, is exploring partnership opportunities with top Indian educational institutions and businesses. While it does not intend to open an India campus or offer tailored corporate degrees, it is looking at research avenues in collaboration with centres of academic excellence in the country. On his recent visit to India to meet leading institutions and government representatives, UNSW President and Vice-Chancellor, FRED HILMER, spoke to Piyali Mandal & Nivedita Mookerji about student safety on Australian campuses, competition from other countries in the race for being a popular overseas education destination and visa reforms, among other things. Edited excerpts:

Q&A

FRED HILMER
President and VC,
University of New South Wales

Do you think the recent attacks on Indian students in Australia have had an adverse impact on the latter as an education destination? The media reports were quite damaging. They were based on a relatively few incidents. The negative sentiment is unfortunate. When you are here, Australia is invisible. You see it as one place. However, in reality, it is a very big and diverse country. At our campus, we have had no issues regarding students' safety. A word-of-mouth from the people who have been at our campus is very important. These things happen and you have to live with them. We will continue telling our story.

Has there been a backlash? Has the number of students declined since the incidents? The number has certainly declined. Earlier, India was number four in terms of students' enrolment. It has now slipped to the fifth spot.

What initiatives have you taken to instill confidence in people vis-à-vis education in Australia? We are talking to educational institutions, agents and the government here. I hope they will get a better sense of things and realise that Australia is a good place to study. We are working with different organisations regarding the flow of students back and forth. I am meeting the secretary of higher education and officials from the University Grants Commission. We have worked closely with our government on the student visa programme. The new recommendations will support high-quality students. A favourable visa programme is a critical part of the Australian policy. There is nothing stronger than the students studying in Australia going back to their country and vice versa.

What is the proportion of Indian students studying in your university on full fee? Do you propose to increase the number of scholarships? Most students from India are usually on full fee. Yes, we are looking at increasing scholarships. We would moderately increase these for research programmes.

The US and the UK remain among the most favoured destinations for Indian students. How does Australia compare? Also, do you see any threat from Asian countries like Singapore? Australia fell back a little after the bad publicity. I think we are seeing strong interest again. Every country has its own problems. I just came back from the UK, which is very troubled. In the US, funding for a number of universities is being cut. Australia has a relatively strong position. Our government is increasing education funding. Moreover, when you pass out of college, you can get a job in the country. The Australian economy is good; they will not find it difficult to get a job.

As far as Singapore is concerned, we do not see it as a threat. Asian students like the experience of studying in Australia. It gives them a truly international experience.

What kind of collaborations are you looking at in India? We are an MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology)-style university. So, the bulk of our collaborations would be in science and technology. We have a collaboration with the Prasad Rao Eye Institute. We expect some collaboration with the Indian Institute of Science. We are also working on a Masters of Public Health programme in collaboration with the Christian Medical University, Vellore. We have had a number of discussions with Kapil Sibal, the education minister. We are also in talks with the IITs and IIMs. We are at an initial stage of discussion with IIM-Ahmedabad, for partnership around our flagship MBA programme.

You talked about educational institutes. What about the corporate sector? Are you planning to collaborate with them as well? We will hold discussions with corporate in India November. Our team is setting up a series of meetings with top-end corporate and industry leaders here. We are looking at building internship models. Under these, our students will have access to the corporate across India. However, we will not do any tailored corporate degree. It is very unlikely. We might conduct such courses in partnership with Indian educational institutes, but not with a corporate entity.

You are bullish on the Indian education sector. Do you plan to open a campus here? We believe in the partnership model. Universities, by nature, are local and we do better when we are like partners. It is mutually beneficial. Education is not a business. It is not a business market. The sector is generally very heavily regulated. We want to collaborate with universities and not compete against them to get more students.

You have seen the corporate world closely during your association with Fairfax and Pacific Powers, among others. What's your take on the Australian business engagement in India? These are still early days. India and Australia had been a bit off each other's radar for some time. There is enormous opportunity in the information technology and energy sectors, among others. The build-up will come from the history of engagement in education.
Make old test papers public: CIC to AIIMS

New Delhi: The Central Information Commission has directed the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) to make public archives of its question papers for MBBS entrance examination for the past 20 years.

The direction came after the premier medical institute objected to the disclosure of information to an RTI applicant, saying the question papers were original "literary" works of experts, the copyright of which was vested with the AIIMS.

Citing exemption clauses of the transparency law, AIIMS said it was under no obligation to disclose them unless larger public warrants them to be disclosed. It also said experts who prepared these papers had special rights as per Copyrights Act and the institute was protecting these rights.

It also said making these papers were held in fiduciary capacity with AIIMS by the experts who prepared them, hence cannot be disclosed. The institute also raised apprehension that these question papers might be used for commercial purposes.

Rejecting the contentions of AIIMS, information commissioner Shailesh Gandhi said exemption clause of the RTI Act regarding copyright information was attracted only when disclosure would harm competitive position of third party and not of the medical institute itself.

"It is apparent that AIIMS is not a commercial body that competes with other organizations," Gandhi said.

The CIC also rejected the argument that since these question papers were held by AIIMS in fiduciary capacity, they should be withheld from disclosure.

According to AIIMS, the question bank was limited and if it is disclosed, questions will no longer remain a secret, which would be a compromise on the high standards of selection procedure and selection of meritorious students.

But the CIC rejected the argument, saying according to the RTI Act, information could only be denied on the basis of clauses given in the law.
The end of the universal university

The government cannot shift its higher education responsibilities to the private sector

D. RANA

POST-SECONDARY education in India was never considered free and universal. It has always been the prerogative of the few. It was not considered worthwhile for all till Mahatma Jyotirao Phule, in a memorandum to the Hunter Commission in 1882, criticised the British, saying that they were providing higher education to upper castes by taxing illiterate farmers. Muslims in the Madras Presidency also appealed to the Hunter Commission for places in schools and colleges. Thereafter, the government introduced what is now known as reservations in educational institutions, which became an all-India programme after independence.

But higher education was never made universal, as it was offered by private colleges from the beginning. The British Indian government introduced the grant-in-aid system to support private enterprise and philanthropy before independence. That continued for a long time till the unaided ("self financing") college scheme came into operation a few decades ago.

Now higher education is controlled by the government through the universities and regulatory bodies such as UGC, AICTE, ICAR, and so on. Enough of their officers are now in jail to show how much corruption in the higher education system has been enabled by the new economic policy towards higher education.

The World Bank and portmanteau recommendations for India differ from the free or accessible higher education prevailing in the West. It is a shame that an independent country is relying on foreign recommendations — and sends crores of foreign aid abroad for the higher education of the rich. There is no difference between the present government and the previous NDA government as far as higher education is concerned. Vajpayee’s NDA appointed a committee under Adina Birla to recommend reforms in higher education in 2000; it repeated the World Bank line and further recommended that privatization of higher education is the only way through which we can reach our goals. The UP government has appointed Sam Pitroda, a US-based technocrat, to recommend measures to improve knowledge systems in India. He recommended that we should have 1,500 universities, to compete with China; and as the government doesn’t have the capacity to invest in higher education, it was better to invite foreign universities.

Kapil Sibal has jumped at the recommendations, and prepared four or five bills to implement them, which are pending before Parliament. The government has not even looked at what the advanced capitalist countries like the US and UK, their model states, are doing about higher education. For example, the Obama government has taken crucial decisions to improve the attendance of African-Americans in universities, with additional funding. We, meanwhile, suffer several dislocations in our higher education today. We all know that due to the unhindered competition among private colleges in Jammu, Nanda, and Andhra, hundreds of engineering colleges were opened a few years ago, most offering IT-related courses. Recession in the West has reduced the demand for BPO services, and for the body-shopping in which companies like Infosys and TCS send educated bonded labourers abroad or do the same day-labour jobs in India. This has impacted the demand for IT courses, and I am told that hundreds of colleges in the south could be closed. Imagine the waste of the lack of guidance and support by the government.

The problems in our education system, including higher education, are because of the government’s unwillingness to take steps in the development of education, leaving everything to the market. This is not correct. A state has a responsibility to provide minimum services in education, health, and welfare. But the government’s attitude, particularly of the policymaking body, the Planning Commission, is disgusting — as if they are there to serve a few private individuals and corporates, and make policies only for them. Their idea of PPP — public-private partnership — is basically a privatization strategy. They wanted the higher education system to be developed through PPP mode. Well, we all know what has happened to engineering colleges. So how can we support PPP now in higher education? Rather, it is the duty of the state, particularly in a country like India, to take responsibility for higher education. It is its duty to ensure quality, and skills that are in demand in the labour market.

Universities in the states suffer several problems. They do not have teachers, and cannot pay salaries and pensions. Meanwhile, some teachers in private colleges are paid less than Rs 1,000 a month. Social science departments are short of students, and those in high-tech courses like IT and biotechnology lack skills necessary for the job market. It is under these conditions that we are thinking of free higher education for all.

The Planning Commission has targeted, as it appears to be a part of the UN millennium development goals, 15 per cent enrolment in higher education at the end of 2011 and 30 per cent by the end of 2020. Is it possible for the system to achieve those goals, as we have now only around 13 per cent, after including distance-mode education? The state has a responsibility and duty to provide free higher education to all those eligible, all we achieve at least 25 per cent enrolment. It cannot simply depend on the private sector.

The writer is national secretary of the CPU and a Rajya Sabha MP
Soaring heights for civil engineers

Rapid growth in infrastructure and a flourishing building construction is opening up plethora of job opportunities for civil engineers

Lalit Jindal

SPRAWLING jungles of steel, cement, machinery and engineers and workers on site... be it an upcoming Metro station or a flyover in construction, one look at your surroundings is enough to drive the message home that Indian infrastructure industry is certainly gaining on.

Considering the massive landmass that our country is, the scope of infrastructure in various forms, viz roads and highways, flyovers, railway and metro lines, ports and airports, toll plazas, etc, is immense.

What has been a sector lagging behind others for years, now looks promising as its engines of growth are being fuelled by the emerging demands of the world's second-fastest growing major economy. Indian economy has undergone fundamental changes over the last decade. The strong level of economic growth achieved in the country of late has led to an exponential increase in per capita income. This, in turn, has resulted in the growth of infrastructure services, including energy, transportation, telecom, water supply and urban infrastructure. Needless to say there will be a lot of structural opportunities in our country that will create a huge demand for civil engineers.

The investment in infrastructure, at home, has increased from 4.9% of the gross domestic product (GDP) in 2002-03 to 7.18% in 2008-09. It is expected to increase to 8.27% in the final year of the 11th Plan and likely to touch 10% of GDP in the 12th Five Year Plan (2012-2017). In fact, as per this year's Union Budget, India has increased her spending on infrastructure by 25%.

The initiatives taken by the government, including opening up a number of infrastructure sectors to private players, promoting investment in the sector by permitting FDI, huge spending on projects like the National Highway Development Project, National Maritime Development Programme, etc, have opened up significant opportunities for investors.

Considered one of the oldest engineering disciplines, civil engineering involves planning, designing and executing structural works. The profession deals with an array of engineering tasks, including designing, supervision and construction activities of public works such as roads, buildings, airports, dams, bridges, tunnels, water works, ports and sewage systems. Planning and designing a project, constructing the project to the required scale, and maintenance of the product comes under the purview of a civil engineer. The major specialisations within civil engineering are structural, water resources, environmental, construction, transportation, geotechnical engineering, etc.

To cope up with the growing pressures of the industry, students of civil engineering need to develop highly specialised skills, such as creativity and an innovative approach to solving problems; the ability to analyse and interpret diverse, complex data; critical thinking and the ability to evaluate designs, plans and projects; effective assessment and management of risk, resources and time; highly developed numeracy and computer literacy; interpersonal, sensitivity, persuasiveness and the ability to work as part of a team; written and oral communication skills; and awareness of ethical as well as environmental issues.

Also, civil engineering graduates should focus on getting training on the job. Live industry projects, during internships, help the students a lot in developing some of the above listed skills. Based on the knowledge gained at hand through practical experience, students become worthy enough to apply for posts in the various R&D projects of companies related to infrastructure sector. They can easily find work as a supervisor of a construction site or a managerial position in design, research, as well as in the teaching line.

Lastly, it would be wrong to say that for students of civil engineering the future simply looks promising. Rather with the growing number of flyovers, bridges, roads, metros, ports, canals, dams and buildings, this profession is bound to experience soaring heights.

The author is general secretary, Modern Institute of Engineering & Technology

Hindustan Times

Title: Obama links education reform to economic recovery

Author:

Location: WASHINGTON:

Article Date: 09/26/2011

Obama links education reform to economic recovery

WASHINGTON: Young people in the United States are falling behind their overseas peers in reading, math and science, President Barack Obama said on Saturday, calling education reform an essential part of economic recovery.
TEST TIPS

BELL THE CAT

CAT scores will now be accepted for admissions to management programmes at the IITs, IISc and FMS, among others. Harini Srimam finds out more.

The new move to accept CAT (Common Admission Test) scores for admission to MBA programmes at IITs (Indian Institutes of Technology), IISc (Indian Institute of Sciences, Bangalore) and FMS (Faculty of Management Studies, Delhi) has been met with mixed reactions. While CAT scores are considered for admissions to over 140 business schools in the country — including the prestigious IIMs — IITs, IISc and FMS had, until last year, conducted their own tests (in addition to considering CAT scores) for admission to their respective MBA programmes.

Now, however, the IITs have unanimously decided to scrap JMET and accept CAT scores to select students for their MBA programmes. While this move was made in a bid to reduce the number of examinations, students and MBA aspirants feel that this has put them under more pressure.

We do not have a choice but to perform well in CAT to make it to the top B-schools.

Vaishnavi Jayaraman, who graduated in mechanical engineering from SSN College, Chennai and plans to do her MBA, says, “Earlier, MBA aspirants had a wider choice of exams. If you did not do well in one exam, you could make up for it in the next one. Now we are under more pressure because we do not have a choice but to perform well in CAT to make it to the top-rung B-schools.” On the brighter side, she adds, the pattern has changed for the better with the number of sections reduced from three to two, with a time limit of 70 minutes per section.

S Balasubramanian, director, TIME (a management coaching centre), believes that the new move has both positives and negatives. “The number of exams a student has to prepare for has now come down. But also, now they have only one shot at securing admissions into the college of their choice,” he says.

The IITs have a different take on the issue and they believe that the use of CAT scores for admissions is also a way of showing solidarity with other reputed B-schools in the country. G Srinivasan, HOD, department of management studies, IIT Madras, explains, “Every year, only about 40,000 students/aspirants take the JMET, as opposed to over four lakh students who take GATE and JEE. We must acknowledge that although students will be under pressure, this will help reduce their preparation burden. Besides, we have the independence to choose what exams to use for admissions.” He argues that there is not much of a difference between JMET and CAT.

LS Ganesh, professor, department of management studies, IIT Madras, says, “CAT is a well-evolved exam and in any case, there are more students taking CAT than JMET. Besides, our MBA programmes are on a par with those offered at other reputed institutes. It will help us re-align our image as a business school.”

However, other criteria like cut-offs, performance in group discussions and interviews will ultimately dictate admission of a student in the programme.
40 सीटों के लिए 1720 विद्यार्थियों ने दी बीटेक प्रवेश परीक्षा

राष्ट्रीय सहरा ND 26/09/2011

40 सीटों के लिए 1720 विद्यार्थियों ने दी बीटेक प्रवेश परीक्षा

नई दिल्ली (एससीबी)। दिल्ली विश्वविद्यालय द्वारा पोषित शिक्षा के संबंध में सरकारी पॉलिटिक्स एंड इकोनॉमिक्स अड्डा एतिहासिक विश्व मैथिलिक द्वारा सुझावित करने के लिए रिपोर्ट को कैपेट में प्रकाश पार्श्व प्रवेश परीक्षा आयोजित की गई। परीक्षा में 1720 छात्र शामिल थे। कलास्त्र कोल्हेचन सेंट्रल के समन्वयक थे। अमर कुमार ने बताया कि परीक्षा में 11 से दोस्तों होने के बिना तक आयोजित की गई। परीक्षा का शुभारंभ 9.30 बजे होता था। परीक्षा के दौरान छात्रों को दूसरे छात्रों को अभ्यास कराने की इजाजत दी गई। परीक्षा को आयोजित करने वालों ने बताया कि परीक्षा के 4 अंशों के लिए दो दिनों में प्रवेश परीक्षा की गई।

- शाखा मंत्रालय तक (3 और 4 अक्टूबर की गयी)
- शाखा मंत्रालय (8 और 11 अक्टूबर की गयी)
- शाखा मंत्रालय (8 और 11 अक्टूबर की गयी)
- शाखा मंत्रालय (8 और 11 अक्टूबर की गयी)

शाखा मंत्रालय के आधार पर यह पता चला गया कि 90% छात्रों ने अपने आयोजित करने वाले परीक्षा में दूसरे छात्रों को अभ्यास कराने की इजाजत दी गई। शाखा मंत्रालय के आधार पर यह पता चला गया कि 90% छात्रों ने अपने आयोजित करने वाले परीक्षा में दूसरे छात्रों को अभ्यास कराने की इजाजत दी गई।