

money from fees, consultation, industry support, management, and some government support through projects (UGC/MHRD/S&T). I collect good faculty who establish a good reputation for teaching and research, and a good liaison with industry. As I create suitable conditions to attract better faculty, without bothering about the number of positions, the teacher–student ratio improves, and the feedback of ‘feel good’ continues. My reliance on government funds reduces.

This is exactly what the government wants. But in reality, the government is giving out contradictory signals. On the one hand, the government wants institutions to generate funds and become self-reliant, and on the other, it puts hurdles in their path.

Is it possible to create self-supporting institutions of higher learning which do excellently well, not only in teaching but also in research and development? IIMs were, in fact, marching towards that goal, but unfortunately they have been pulled back.

Many industries now have good R&D wings. MNCs such as GE and HLL have excellent research laboratories, with mod-

ern equipment. They employ Ph.D.s (in materials science, chemical engineering, physics, metallurgy, etc.) and pay them well. Their R&D laboratories are far superior to most university departments in the country. Obviously, they run these as a part of the business proposition and expect to earn from them in due course. Foreign universities are establishing their centres and providing various courses and degrees at a cost. Can we not establish half a dozen such institutes of international standards? The trouble is that we have not yet learnt to look at our educational institutes as a business and industry, yet talk of quality and excellence. After all, private industries do thrive without government support. Why can we then not allow at least some institutes to follow the industry path?

The phenomenon of private, self-financed and yet excellent institutes has appeared on the educational horizons of our country in the past decade or so. We do have a Sylvan International University, a few totally self-financed colleges, some of them autonomous, and quite a few international schools spread over the country. The government should help spread this culture.

Having decried the MHRD’s decision, let me say that I am surprised at the apathy shown by all directors and board members of IIMs. I am amazed how meekly they are taking this decision, lying down. Shekhar Gupta’s centre-page editorial in *Indian Express* (10 February 2004), is a telling account of the apathy. I would have expected effective protests from individuals and groups, and even some resignations on this issue. The only protest was a letter from Narayanamurthy and his meeting with the Prime Minister. But after that, there is silence everywhere and all the concerned people seem to have accepted the fait accompli.

Let the government open five new IIMs, with annual fees of Rs 30,000 and provide all the funds to the new IIMs. Let us see the result after five years or a decade. It will be clear which of these institutes (the old or new IIMs) are preferred by brighter students, and even by poorer ones among them.

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Workshops on open access

Tushar Chakrabarti¹ suggests that ‘government funding agencies can enforce that all the research works carried out with their money are published only in Indian journals’. While his intentions are good, I doubt if this suggestion would be acceptable to many researchers. To some it may look undemocratic and others may see it as bureaucratic interference and curtailment of freedom. What the funding agencies could do is to insist that all findings resulting from their support should be made freely accessible to all through either publication in a toll-free (open access) journal (such as *Current Science*) irrespective of whether it is

Indian or foreign or by placing the paper in an interoperable institutional archive. This is what the Budapest Open Access Initiative and champions of open access such as Stevan Harnad are advocating.

On a suggestion from M. S. Valiathan, President of the Indian National Science Academy, the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF), Chennai, is organizing two three-day workshops on open access in the first week of May 2004. These workshops aim to train 40–48 persons from higher educational and government research institutions in setting up institutional archives using the eprints software and the Open Archives interoper-

ability protocol. Those who want to attend the workshop may please contact Mr S. Senthilkumaran, Associate Director, MSSRF, Chennai 600 113, India. e-mail: <senthil@mssrf.res.in>.

1. Chakrabarti, T., *Curr. Sci.*, 2004, **86**, 625.

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