

FIFTH DIMENSION

A BESU, SHIBPUR STUDENTS' ENDEAVOUR

A brief retrospective:

After the inception of IITs through implementation of N.R.Sarkar committee report in 1947, several decades have passed without any notable measure towards furtherance of higher technical education in our country. The eagerly awaited breakthrough appeared in the sight with the announcement of a programme of setting up new IITs in our country by the former Prime Minister Shri Atal Behari Bajpayee in his Independence Day speech on August 15, 2003. Immediately, the minister of Human Resource Development (MHRD) of Government of India (GOI) initiated the programme by forming the S.K.Joshi committee in 2003, with the mandate for identification of institution of having the potential for transformation into IITs. In the report submitted to MHRD, GOI the committee short listed seven prospective institutions for upgradation. The report prompted MHRD to form an expert committee with Prof. M. Anandkrishnan as the convener and Prof A. Ghosh and Prof DV Singh as the members with an aim to assess the potential of the identified institutions. On the basis of a rigorous diagnostic exercise, the committee prepared a detailed roadmap for upgradation of the institution and submitted its report to the MHRD in February 2006. It is a matter of pride for everyone related to BESU, Shibpur that it has been identified most suitable institute to be transformed into an institution of National Importance (INI). Five such institutions will be named as Indian Institute of Engineering Science and Technology (IEST).

In the year 1945, despite its legacy in the area of technological education, BE College was left outside the purview of N.R.Sarkar committee. In the post independence India, major attention was focused on the IITs and IISCs with an aim to project this institutions as the brand of the country before the world. Institutions like BE College continued to survive as a State aided college for the UG engineering education. However, BE College by virtue of its acclaimed legacy continued to excel in the UG education along with special emphasis on PG education and research. In recognition to its contribution, BE College was conferred the status of autonomy in the form of Deemed University in 1993. The recognition fired the aspiration but soon the crisis was realized. The University critically assessed the crisis and through a meticulous exercise figured out the projected vision and upgradation programme. It was particularly realized that the conceived paradigm shift calls for not some special remedial measure, but an upgradation package under the scope of INI. In April 2004, the then VC submitted a proposal to MHRD for upgradation of BEC(DU) to an INI. The effort eventually coincided with the launching of the aforesaid transformation programme by MHRD.

In the course of interactions with the MHRD, BEC(DU) exerted its best endeavor and asserted its eagerness for the transformation to INI. In this direction, the aspiration has incessantly been echoed from all the corners of BEC fraternity. In the mean time, the institution was transformed a University in Oct, 2004 and was named, Bengal Engineering and Science University, Shibpur, BESUS. The Anandkrishnan committee visited BESU, Shibpur in December,2005. On completion of their task the committee submitted its recommendation to MHRD on February 13 2006. The committee placed BESUS on the top of the list of the five prospective institutions.

In their report the committee proposed a novel conceptual mode of a high level technological institution of national importance. The features of this model are that it is an INI formed by an act of Parliament of India with a nomenclature of Indian Institute of Science and Technology (IEST). All IESTs will together constitute a new system of institutions in technical education in the country. The proposed governance system of the

IITs will be comparable to that of the IITs, including Common Council for all IESTs and the primary source of financial support will be the MHRD, GOI.

The committee recommended that in order the basic objectives of transformation related to strengthening the key attributes of the institution, the financial outlay for the 11th plan period(2007-2012) required to fulfill the common and specific goals of BESUS for transformation to IEST has been estimated at Rs. 519.55 crore including a recurring annual grant of Rs. 47.31 crores.

Our issues of concern:

To us major causes of concern in this regard may be summarized as following

- 1) Upgradation of BESU, Shibpur to INI level will not only make provision but also generate impetus and encouragement to local students for higher technological education for example, a large number of students qualify from Kharagpur town considering the population of Kharagpur. This is true for the states which have the other IIT/INIs too. Just to cite another example, a large number of medical students from Delhi qualify to AIIMS. We feel that having such an institute in vicinity of Kolkata and West Bengal and Kolkata will cause a serious change in the motivation of outbooming youngsters to make themselves more competent to face the global economy and compete with their other state fellow student colleagues with more preparedness rather being within an womb and being protected. Most importantly, off late WBCHSE has taken appropriate measures to upgrade the syllabi in order to enhance the share of the students from our state to national level opportunities.
- 2) The scope of graduate level technical education has increased sharply in last one decade. But the scope of PG level technical education has not developed in that ratio. This upgradation will unlock the door of higher technical education to the students those who are coming out with B.Tech level degree from private engineering colleges and other state engineering colleges
- 3) Looking at the scenario of BEC, even after 150 years of its existence and being the forerunner in technical education, BEC is deprived of National level branding whereas the other contemporary institution i.e. Roorkee University has conferred the same.
- 4) BE College has contributed significantly to the technical development of our country during the pre and post independent era. However, the due recognition of the institute is still awaiting
- 5) The domain of Technological Education in which BESUS used to reign in the past is gradually shrinking due to the fast growth of newly established under graduate institutes. Therefore at this point of time BEC should be elevated to a level such that its potential may appropriately utilized for the cause of High Level Technical Education. At the same time it may be appreciated that in the present era of knowledge based technological development, there is an acute scarcity in the PG manpower for example..
 - a) Restricted opportunity of quality PG education in our state
 - b) Entry to the institute with INI brand is restricted to only about three thousand students though about 15000 students deserve the same and the need is escalating.
In this context, BEC is having the right kind of ambience, potential and preparedness to support the crisis.

- 6) In the past graduates from BEC have been placed in the apex of the professional sector. However during the last couple of decades, there is of gradual decadence in the process of prosperity. The reason is fast development of other technological institutions during this period. While BEC has been kept away from competitive upgradation.

Our opinion:

A careful scrutiny reveals that in their report the Anandkrishnan committee has encompassed all the crucial aspects and proposed a well conceived target oriented approach. Therefore the recommendations must be implemented in its totality for the upgradation of BESUS.

At this crucial juncture, we the students of BESUS in order to achieve a consensus regarding the upgradation of BESUS to INI a thread based discussion among the stakeholders and the visionaries is warranted. With this motivation we call for a convention to discuss the various aspects of upgradation process and the necessity and measures to expediate the process by all means possible. We eagerly await your honoured presence to enlighten us in this very event.

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