

Contribution to :  
Initiating a dialog on improving our  
academic culture

IIT Bombay, 23-Jan-2013  
From : U A Yajnik

# Preamble

This is to share some facts, perspectives and thoughts with colleagues, also in my capacity as a functionary.

Feedback will be appreciated

# Extra-curricular activities

- Students Gymkhana activities under General Secretaries
  - Cultural, Sports and Academic (=STAB, see below)
    - Funded by Institute
    - Run throughout the semester
    - Cult and Sports mostly internal, with a few intercollegiate events
    - Cult flagship event : Performing Arts Festival ( PAF)
    - Sports flagship event : Inter-IIT Sports Meet
    - S&T Activities Body more concerned with external Tech competitions

# Extra-curricular ( contd )

- Independent Bodies : Mood Indigo, TechFest, E-Cell
  - Sponsored externally
  - Mood Indigo and TechFest have specific windows of a few days
  - E-Cell has flagship event E-Summit in Feb. Other activities spread through the semesters are in the form of seminars and discussions.

# Extra-curricular ( contd )

- Too many events / activities?
  - A vast and varied talent pool among students
  - Many are discovering newer talents
  - A substantial fraction have been class monitors, school captains and organisers during school
    - A skew in the ratio of leaders to participants
  - Need for having something for each type
  - Many events; but each student involved in only one or two category of events

# Limiting distraction

- Attempts to limit number of hours of activities continue :
  - Only major events are Hostel based competitions
    - Reason : otherwise hostel image issue undermines content and elicits forced participation.
  - Club (=interest group) based ( indep of hostel) activities have been mooted
    - --> Many talents, many niche clubs
  - Non-competitive and showcase type items to promote content rather than management

# Limiting distraction

## Specific Measures

- Independent Bodies festivals are restricted to windows of a few days
  - Strictly imposed since Autumn 2011, eliminating so called “pre-Mood-I” and “pre-TechFest” events occurring during semester
- Zero sponsorship permitted under Gymkhana banner

# Limiting distraction ( contd)

- Examples :
  - “National Debate” needed sponsorship funds --> asked to consolidate with Mood Indigo and to be held strictly during Mood I dates
  - Sports Leagues ( clubs) for cricket, football, volleyball have been formed. Not permitted to take sponsorship ( to prevent the marketing effort, and the distractions from sponsors)
  - Funds and equipment provided for labor jobs during PAF's



# An initiative for PG students

- Traditionally not involved either due to shortness of stay (Masters) or different age group (PhD)
- As of this year we are launching a scheme for every PG student to undertake a core Sports activity :
  - once a week for a minimum one semester ( can continue on their own beyond that)
  - Fitness and recreational skills they should carry with them later in life.

# Summary of Extra-curricular ...

- Essential to personality development
- Immense potential in the highly selected youth of IIT
- **Channel** for self-development
- “Curbing extra-curriculars should result in greater academic participation” cannot be a forgone conclusion ... see next section, new economy, new technologies

# Student demotivation and remedies

- Compared to 1975, 1985, 1995, ... several significant *qualitative* differences due to **new economy** and **new technologies**

# Economy : categories of UG students

- Academic bend of mind --> will go into R&D and academics ... probably 20%
- Regardless of academic potential will join job and entrepreneurship careers, most likely also acquiring a Management degree ... probably 40%
- The rest may end up going either way depending on opportunity

# New economy, new technologies

- New economy needs technological inputs / innovation only at a very high level
  - IT is an exception, which is also where many students go
- Emphasis on inter-personal soft skills, team players **with a core of Tech knowledge**, with reduced emphasis on active knowledge
- Project based, result oriented and time bounded execution, with personal ownership **dominates over tech content** ( The TechFest package)

# New educational scenario

Some fragments of thoughts :

- May be fruitful to move towards
  - (i) direction (roadmap) based,
  - (ii) “case study” based, “hands on”  
transfer of knowledge
- As a package rather than as a list of topics “to be covered”
  - Does not require a live teacher continuously
  - Does require a congenial expert **on demand**

# Conclusion

- Extra curriculars are being regulated to reduce managerial and showbiz initiative and increase core talent development
- Modern setting requires soft skills as importantly as technical knowledge
- The 20% keen on academics will continue to be happy with traditional delivery package
- Need to create the flexibility to match the diversity of needs for the larger majority