

# TheMES

A Communication from the President



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*Dear MES-ites,*

## **Future Shock**

*A few months ago, I had informed you about initiatives the Management had launched ahead of Academic Year 2022-23. I had also referred to the accreditation exercises at the Institute of Management (IOM) and the MES Degree College (MESDC). In its first cycle of accreditation, IOM secured a B++ grade with a CGPA of 2.91. MESDC secured A grade with a CGPA of 3.07 in its fourth cycle of accreditation. But certain other developments in the last two months are causing concern. We are trying to analyse and understand the factors behind these developments, respond and prepare ourselves for the future.*

## **Pre-University Education**

*Admissions to I PU classes closed on 12<sup>th</sup> August. 1746 out of the 2000 seats on offer have been taken up by freshers as compared to 1681 and 1605 in the previous two years. However, a new trend is the reduced demand for certain subject combinations in some of our Colleges. Of concern is the declining popularity of PCMB in the Science group or combinations involving Statistics or Mathematics in the Commerce group. Going forward, the Colleges and the Management may have to proactively address the real or imagined fear among students of certain subjects like Biology or Maths.*

*At another level, the declining popularity of PU colleges among students may be due to the inroads made by the so-called Integrated Colleges which are really coaching centres passing off as colleges. As students can access good UG education only through various competitive examinations, it is not surprising that they and the parents prefer institutions that impart knowledge and also prepare them for such examinations. The Department of Pre-University Education (DPUE) must reconsider its stance and permit regular PU colleges to also offer coaching classes on an voluntary basis, subject to certain broad guidelines and safeguards. Otherwise, there is a real danger of the conventional PU colleges being hollowed out.*

## **UG Studies**

*One had expected that the National Education Policy (NEP), 2020 will cause a certain amount of disruption in UG education. 2020-21 was the first year of NEP implementation in Karnataka. However, nothing from last year prepared us for the turmoil we are seeing in admissions to the BA and BSc programs this year at MESDC. Only 418 students have enrolled into the three UG programs in 2022-23 compared to 653 and 702 in the previous two years. Of particular concern is the steep fall in the number of students enrolling into the BSc program to 68 compared to 200 and 252 in the previous two years. The comparable numbers for BA are 48, 81 and 58. Even BCom which had become our flagship program in recent years is languishing with 302 admissions compared to 372 and 392 in the earlier two years.*

*One reason for this is perhaps unexpected competition from established institutions. IISc has decided to offer medical courses from this year to turn out 'Doctor-Scientists'. Bengaluru City University (BCU) to which our Degree College is affiliated is offering BSc in Clinical Nutrition & Dietetics, Rehabilitation Science, etc., BCom in Logistics/Supply Chain Management, Tourism & Travel Management and new UG programs like Bachelor of Social Work, Hotel Management, Visual Arts, etc. While data on actual admissions to these programs is not available, it is easy to see that such job-oriented programs will attract many students, particularly if they are offered by institutions that have PG Departments and Research Centres.*

*Another reason is perhaps the “Two Disciplines + An Optional Elective” combination offered compulsorily under NEP 2020 without much thought and even less preparation. Affiliated colleges like MESDC have not been able to offer anything but the 'plain vanilla' combinations. By contrast, autonomous colleges and deemed to be universities offer interesting, multi-disciplinary combinations such as environmental science with life sciences or quantitative subjects such as mathematics and statistics with physical sciences. Again, in the absence of data, it is difficult to assess the 'pull' factor of such attractively-packaged combinations.*

*The message for MESDC and IOM is clear – “If you can't beat them, join them!”. As an affiliated College of BCU, MESDC and IOM have limitations on the courses and combinations they can offer. Once they become autonomous as per the road map of NEP 2020, they may be able to offer a lot more. But the challenge is not to wait for that magic day to dawn but embark on the journey towards autonomy here and now. This can never be a top-down process driven by the Government of Karnataka (GoK), BCU or even the MES Management. It has to be a bottom-up effort driven by the faculty and staff who have a better feel of the pulse of the students and their*

shifting preferences and ambitions. The Management will of course nurture and support this process.

### **Possible Initiatives**

Realising that as an institution, it has under-invested in its faculty, MES has recently completed a Continuous Professional Development (CPD) program for 230 teachers at its two schools and four PU colleges. This was in the nature of a foundational program that will make them more familiar with various aspects of blended learning and enhance their personal productivity, communication and classroom management skills. Feedback from the teachers and others is being factored in before two booster sessions are offered to the teachers later this year. The program will be subject to a 360-degree evaluation and offered next year with enhanced content and changed emphasis, where required.

A second initiative is on Digital Learning. MES is exploring the possibility of setting up its own Digital Learning Centre (DLC) in partnership with IIMB. IIMB uses three digital platforms for its online courses – edX, IIMBx and SWAYAM. A MES team led by the Principals of MESDC and IOM visited IIMB recently. At internal discussions thereafter, the consensus was that Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) where IIMB can offer Faculty Development Programs for MES faculty will be identified. MES will set up teams for pedagogy, video recording/editing and back-end processing and invest in its own DLC which will come up at the MES Teachers College (MESTC). IIMB will be our partner in this effort. This initiative will help MES to transcend its limitations of faculty to offer interesting combinations for its UG programs under NEP 2020. It may be possible to use the DLC to improve the quality of teaching and enhance learning outcomes at our PU Colleges. The details have to be worked out and negotiated with IIMB.

A third initiative would be to leverage the potential of the MES alumni in re-inventing and re-branding MES. So far, alumni-sponsored efforts have been in commemorating the memories of distinguished teachers from the past, donating books, helping disadvantaged students or mentoring them. Since the reinventing of MES has to be led by its faculty, the focus must now shift to bringing the teachers in touch with the alumni, many of whom are in education and have considerable experience of how institutions in other countries have responded to the twin challenges of competition for students and technological change.

In the last two months, I have had the pleasure of meeting two distinguished alumni and sharing some of the above thoughts and ideas with them. They are quite excited and keen on

working with MES. Bin Srinidhi is Professor of Accounting at the University of Texas at Arlington who has also worked at the City University of Hong Kong. Dr. B L Ramakrishna has been with Arizona State University and working on crosscutting issues in engineering and biology. He is Chief Academic Advisor at Plaksha University, Mohali which is a new technology and research university. The above two are also part of a sub-group of alumni who meet online regularly to chat about possible involvement with their alma mater. I hope that this communication itself which is going out to both the faculty and the registered alumni can lead to an exchange of ideas and lead to new initiatives. Hopefully, the MES College Alumni Association (MESCAA) can facilitate this. At some stage, the MES Management can also get involved.

### **Invitation**

*Future Shock* is the title of a 1970 book by Alvin Toffler. According to him, future shock is “the shattering stress and disorientation” felt by people who are confronted with “too much change in too short a period of time”. It does appear that MES, in its 65<sup>th</sup> year, is going through some kind of a future shock. This shock is the outcome of the inability to predict what is going to come next, particularly as NEP 2020 is rolled out and the world becomes even more diversified and competitive. But as Abraham Lincoln observed “The best way to predict the future is to create it.” I invite all MES-ites, present and past, to get involved with their heart and soul in creating the MES of the future in say, the next ten years!

Sincerely,

**S. Krishna Kumar,**

Hon. President,

Mysore Education Society,

24<sup>th</sup> August 2022

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