

HOW ENGINEERING TEACHING HAS UNDERGONE A CHANGE

Directors of different IITs talk about the changing education process in the last four decades

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A couple of decades ago, many engineering students studying at various IITs had no inkling that one day they will go on to head the same institutes, in which they once studied. Several IIT directors who did their bachelor's and master's from the IITs are aware of both sides of the institutes.

In the 70s, IITs were just nationally acknowledged undergraduate institutes, there was no maddening craze surrounding them.

TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIP

In late 1970s, there were only five IITs, which were located in remote places. This increased the connect between students and faculty members.

"In 1974, when I was a BTech student at IIT Kanpur, IITs could hardly accommodate close to 1200 students. There used to be a close-knit relationship between teachers and students because IITs were situated in remote locations and there were only handful of students. It was a common sight to see student-teachers playing a match of tennis," says Uday B Desai, present and



GANESH CHANDRA



Uday B Desai

Director, IIT-Hyderabad
BTech, IIT-Kanpur, 1974



Timothy Gonsalves

Director, IIT-Mandi
BTech, IIT-Madras, 1976



Rajiv Shekhar

Director, IIT-Dhanbad
BTech, IIT-Kanpur, 1982

founding director of IIT Hyderabad.

With the increasing numbers of IITs, the faculty members have started contributing to other IITs as well which has reduced their time in the campus. "Now, professors have started travelling to other centres, and students have to make an effort to freely interact with the faculty," said Rajiv Shekhar, director of IIT Dhanbad, who studied BTech from IIT Kanpur (1982 batch).

DIFFERENT ASPIRATIONS

With the world becoming more competitive and horizon of opportunities expanding, students' goals are also changing.

Nowadays, students have huge aspirations and the means to follow them. "Students in 60s-70s did not know the relevance of IITs as the institutions were not well-established, but now, students enter the campus with pre-conceived notions and plans," said

Desai. Speaking about students being more focused now, Shekhar says, "Students at the age of 21 want to be independent; we hardly knew what we wanted to do when we were in college. We just cared about going to classes and have fun."

TEACHING TECHNOLOGY

Teaching technology to students who hardly had access to any technology would have been way different than teaching to a generation of iPads and laptops users.

"If it is just about lectures it was easier earlier, but now teachers also have to keep learning to match pace with the technological advancements," says Timothy Gonsalves, director of IIT Mandi who pursued BTech from IIT Madras in 1976.

Nowadays, students have access to online lectures, reading material from some of the well-known institutions.

"Teaching pedagogy has not changed but with introduction of digital boards and PowerPoint presentations, but the classroom transaction of instructions has changed. I still feel uncomfortable writing on the white-board," said Shekhar.