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### Urgent need for good faculty in varsities

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*The practice has been that the contracts continue for a few years and eventually due to agitations, the universities are forced to recruit them in regular positions, says RGKUT V-C*



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With intense debate on quality of teachers in the universities and the recruitment processes always in question, Prof.

Ratnam V. Raja Kumar, V-C of RGUKT explains how he recruited faculty through innovative methods. It is a model that other varsities can follow.

Rajiv Gandhi University of Knowledge Technologies (RGUKT) was started with the yearly intake of 6,000 students. Beginning at such a scale is unheard of in the country and even abroad and could be risking the education of a large number of rural students. There was not even one faculty member available in the campuses at the level of Assistant Professor or above, even in sciences on the campuses.

There were no permanent or even contractual faculty positions sanctioned and available. It was a nearly an impossible task to create a strong faculty at the matching scale. In view of the involved process of regular faculty recruitment, many a time, state run universities and institutions recruit faculty and staff on yearly contract or on Ad-hoc basis, many of whom are those left out by the different grades of software companies.

The prevailing practice has been that the contracts continue for a few years and eventually due to agitations from the staff, the universities are forced to recruit the same in permanent or regular positions. This practice is dangerous, very unfortunate and it forces the universities to compromise on standards, very seriously affecting the quality of education.

I personally felt that I should never ever do it under my leadership. When NASSCOM has been repeatedly emphasizing that only the top 20 per cent of the graduating engineers in the country are employable by the software industry, for the more domain specific teaching positions, I feel that teachers should be taken from the top 5-10% of the countries' postgraduates considering that it is the education of the future generation of the country that is at stake.

It is well-known at least to the engineering educationists that cream of the postgraduates of the country are available mostly in the IITs and IISc and to a smaller extent in the NITs and to a much smaller extent in the State universities. It is also known that mostly the top two per cent of rank holders of the Graduate Aptitude Test in Engineering (GATE) in the various reservation categories only get admissions in the IITs and IISc, barring some rare exceptions. The percentile goes down in the case of NITs and we may find only a small percentage of GATE qualified students in the postgraduate programmes of State universities.

Due to nearly 100 per cent campus placement, the postgraduates of the IITs and also to some extent the bright ones in the NITs are recruited by companies right from the campuses in their final year. Therefore, I decided to tap the IIT postgraduates through campus recruitments. My target has been to tap the fraction of bright ones who are

interested in teaching positions.

Since there were no regulations, rules and no recruitment staff to carry on campus selections I had to create all the procedures and obtain the approval of our governing council by circulation within two days. On the 7th day after my joining, I was sitting at IIT Kharagpur conducting campus recruitment for faculty. Nearly more than 175 shortlisted Ph.D. and postgraduate students with the cut-off CGPA (Cumulative Grade Point Average) of more than 7.5 out of 10 attended the interviews, very good standard of selection was applied and about 45 of them could be finally selected. We covered all the old IITs and IISc too.

Simultaneously contractual positions for faculty were offered for the applicants outside and to tap the bright ones of them. National level selection committees comprising of reputed and active professors were used and high standards were adopted in testing the candidate's abilities on the attributes such as conceptual understanding, depth of domain knowledge, ability to express, interest and attitude towards teaching, research, speaking skills in English and board work, in a spirited manner. This innovative practice has been followed for the last five years.

There were other unwanted challenges in the process including a fraction of employees recruited on temporary assignment misunderstanding the standards set, the pursuit and tried to create hurdles. But there were many who appreciated the procedure.

So far, about 1,100 have been selected, around 650 joined, around 200 resigned subsequently after serving for some time and presently there is about 430 faculty members in position. About 90 per cent of them are from the IIT system and UoH. These faculty members have significantly contributed and there is no exaggeration in stating that they have been responsible for the successful graduation of the first batch despite its near impossible scale.

Unfortunately, retention of them is posing a serious challenge for the university due to stagnant salaries and absence of permanent position opportunities. Unless the resignation trend is controlled the university may suffer very serious losses. The multi-pronged approach has been successful to the extent of respectfully completing the education of the first batch of students despite its scale. Hope RGUKT will be able to benefit from this rare innovation for its successful future and for its life.

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