

BioEdit

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ends in India's biotech education system



It is the college admission season throughout the country. Just the other day, a friend called me from Delhi and wanted my advise regarding the engineering course choice of his son. The youngster was coming to Bangalore to pursue a degree in engineering. He was keen to enrol for a degree in mechanical engineering or biotechnology in one of the city's top colleges. During the counselling process, he changed his mind and then enrolled for a course in instrumentation in yet another college, which was not on his mind

earlier.

The reason was simple. The youngster had learnt that the college would not allow a biotech student to participate in the campus recruitment drive of leading information technology companies. This restrictive practice and inputs from his friends kept him away from biotechnology. On an average, 40 percent of engineering graduates in biotechnology are picked up by software companies every year. Probably to prevent this, this college had devised the restrictive strategy. One of the attractions of a top institution is the quality of campus recruiters. So the biotech industry has lost another potential resource.

In Karnataka, considered to be the hottest destination for biotech education, this year only 20 engineering colleges are offering biotech courses. Nearly a dozen colleges have discontinued their biotechnology course this year. Even those who are

offering the biotech courses are keeping their fingers crossed about filling up the nearly 2,500 biotech seats out of the 80,000 engineering seats on offer in Karnataka this year.

It is in this background that we present the results of the 8th BioSpectrum BT Schools Survey that ranks the country's public and private biotechnology teaching institutions. The declining interest in biotech course started in 2010. Due to the decline in enrolments, the biotech education segment too has recorded a 11 percent drop in revenues,  1,020 crore from the previous year's  1,150 crore. The education sector revenue has decreased despite a marginal increase in the fee collected from a biotech student.

The survey has also revealed that the institutions offering biotechnology courses have stepped up their connect with the industry. The industry interaction will be one of the key differentiators for biotech teaching schools in the near future.

This issue also provides some glimpses into the job market in the biotech industry. We estimate that the industry recruits over 4,000 freshers every year, while national output is close to 20,000 students. HR heads of top biotech companies insist that they are keen to recruit students with a good grounding in life sciences, rather than those passing out with the fancy degree in "biotechnology". The biotech education sector should read the signals from the industry and go back to offering courses in fundamental aspects of biology.

Jawaharlal Nehru University has regained the slot of No.1 public institution after a gap of three years. Jaypee University of Information Technology has however secured the No.1 rank in the private school category. Happy reading!

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