

Knowledge Mission: Kolkata-Kharagpur : 17 – 20 February 2014

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Introduction:

A Knowledge mission in the subject area of 'IT and Engineering' was convened in cities of Kolkata and Kharagpur from 17 to 20 February 2014. Three UK Higher Education Institutions participated in the mission which included visits to local institutions to explore collaborative and recruitment opportunities in areas of IT and Engineering courses.

Participating UK institutions

The UK delegation comprised of the following academicians:

- 1) University of East London - Dr. Mihaela Anca Ciupala, Senior Lecturer,

Topic: Research and research informed teaching in the Civil Engineering field

- 2) Swansea University - Dr. Richard Cobley, Senior Lecturer, College of Engineering,

Topic: Nanotechnology: an Introduction

- 3) University of Hull - Dr. Kevin Paulson, Senior Lecturer, School of Engineering

Topic: Climate Change Effects on Global Telecommunications.

The mission commenced with an all-day visit to Jadavpur University in Kolkata. On the second day the delegation visited Heritage Institute of Technology and B.P. Poddar Institute of Management and Technology. On day three, the mission visited Bengal Engineering and Science University for an all-day programme. The mission was concluded with a daylong visit to IIT Kharagpur.

Each visit comprised of student lectures, faculty interaction and campus tours. The delegation made a brief presentation the university and the lecture topic. The discussion topics at the faculty interaction were centered on the below topics:

1. Existing international collaborations with UK/Indian universities/professors
2. Any joint curriculum/faculty exchange programmes/student exchange programmes
3. Summer courses for students – options/facilities/funding opportunities
4. Short term faculty deputation
5. Group visits between partner institutions
6. Research opportunities and funding (short term and long term)
7. Steps to be taken for developing future collaborations

Key highlights

Day one: 17 February 2014

Jadavpur University (JU)

www.jaduniv.edu.in/index.php

The visit started with a small interaction with the engineering faculty, presided over by Dr. Sivaji Bandyopadhyay, Dean of Engineering Technology. This was followed by hour long simultaneous student interactions in the respective fields of engineering studies where the UK delegates delivered lectures and held discussions and Q and A sessions on their research subjects as well as opportunities in their universities for higher studies for the students. The delegation interacted with students of 3rd and 4th year.

This was followed by a faculty interaction where Jadavpur University made a presentation on their work in the engineering department and their current international collaborations, awards and research as well as opportunities and expectations from the UK universities.

Key outcomes: Academic exchange programme for summer courses. Dual degree possibilities at the PG level with JU already does with France. Subjects of collaboration could be telehealth, climate change which could lead to field trials in India.

Swansea doesn't offer joint PhD Programmes though summer programmes but feel it would be worth exploring. University of East London has similar fields of work as in JU, though summer programmes with about 20 students is possible. Funding opportunities for the joint programmes and students must be explored; British Council's KEP, UKIERI and GREAT campaign are some options.

Total reach: 205 students and 20 faculty members.

Day two: 18 February 2014 (morning)

Heritage Institute of Technology

www.heritageit.edu/

The visit started with a welcome meeting with some faculty members from the department of engineering, including the HoDs, followed by a campus/ department and laboratory tour. The delegates then delivered simultaneous lectures in their respective research topics with Q and A sessions.

Key outcomes: The faculty interaction focused around the areas of integrated MSc and PhD programmes with the UK universities, joint research collaborations between faculties, teacher exchange programmes and summer exchange programmes.

Total reach: 145 students and 15 faculty members.

Day two: 18 February 2014 (evening)

B.P. Poddar Institute of Management and Technology (BPPIMT)

www.bppimt.ac.in/index.asp

The visit began with a meeting with the principal where the agenda for the programme was set. The academics then made brief presentations to the students' body as a whole after which the delegation was split up into different departments for the individual lectures.

The department and laboratory tours proved to be very interesting as the UK academics found similarities in the teaching methods and classwork techniques.

The faculty interaction was presided over by the dean of academics and member of the board of governors, Dr. B.N. Chatterjee.

Key outcomes: Discussion points included curriculum reviews of both countries, exchange programmes for students and professors as well as research collaboration.

Total reach: 95 students and 10 faculty members.

Day three: 19 February 2014

Bengal Engineering and Science University (BESU)

www.becs.ac.in/

The visit began with the delegation and VC meeting along with a few key members of the faculty. An hour and a half long interaction covered over various themes of research, engineering, technological innovation, areas of work in the universities, future plans of work and possibilities of collaboration ensued. Joint research, faculty exchange, student exchange with UK students visiting BESU and possibilities of workshops and dual degree programmes were discussed at length.

This was followed by an extensive tour of laboratories and equipment where the delegates observed ongoing student work and projects, in one case the UK academic discussing at length a problem the student was facing in his research resolving to work out a solution together. Through this tour, some topics and themes ideal for collaboration did spring up. Seminars were delivered to students of respective departments followed by Q & A sessions.

As we were leaving BESU, news came in that BESU had achieved the status of Indian Institute of Engineering, Science and Technology by the Centre. The delegation privileged to be a part of this happy occasion.

Total reach: 160 students and 25 faculty members.

Day four: 20 February 2014

Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur (IIT Kgp)

www.iitkgp.ac.in/

The final day's programme was at IIT Kgp, a little over 100 kms from Kolkata, and one of India's premier Engineering Institutions. An initial meeting with the dean of alumni affairs and international relations, Siddhartha Mukhopadhyay was followed by a campus tour across various departments and labs. Delegates then had separate faculty interactions in respective departments followed by lectures to research students and scholars.

This was followed by a faculty interaction with representations from all departments, presided over by Deputy Director Souvik Bhattacharyya.

IIT's summer programme of two weeks duration comprising of 25 programmes, through which they are looking to draw international students was extensively discussed. Subsequently the UK universities have been following up on this with IIT. IIT also spoke about their big and upcoming plans of internationalization, due to which they are eager to explore UK collaboration and exchange visits. The possibility of faculty visiting from the UK universities or vice versa, adjunct faculty involved with research and teaching was discussed as well as developing industrial participation through partnerships. Sandwich PhDs and two-way student mobility options, curriculum mapping were some other themes extensively discussed.

Total reach: 70 students and 20 faculty members.

Conclusion:

The mission was a successful platform for exploring opportunities in student, faculty and research based exchanges and collaborations, curriculum mapping etc. The discussions explored during the mission would be taken forward by the participating UK and Indian institutions keeping the British Council informed of the developments.

Total audience:

Students: 675

Faculty members: 90

Feedback analysis (Participating UK institutions):

- 80% delegates mentioned in their feedback that the mission met their objectives
- All participating delegates mentioned that the interaction and the content of the programme at institutions was 'Good'
- While 80% 'agreed' that overall this was a high quality event, 80% mentioned that the mission met their expectations and that they have acquired knowledge about institutions in Kolkata through this mission.

Comments by participating delegates:

- Potential research collaborations and staff exchanges, potential student exchanges/internships
- This was a very good opportunity for UEL and its Engineering field to get exposure to Indian institutions and to present its teaching and research activities. This was also a very good opportunity to learn more about the HE institutions visited and their drivers for collaborations. Probably the most important learning point was managing expectations for collaboration from both the Indian institutions and the UK institutions point of view, as their drivers for collaboration opportunities may be different.
- Need more time, Perhaps leave the campus tour to the end and concentrate on seeing labs and people?

Photographs taken at institutions

At Jadavpur University



At Heritage Institute of Technology



At IIT Kharagpur



At B.P. Poddar Institute of Management and Technology



At BESU

