

RICE PRICES ON THE RISE, WHILE VEGETABLE PRICES FALL 14

AP HIGH COURT ASKS EC TO RECONSIDER ORDER ON SYMBOL FOR CHIRANJEEVI PARTY 18



Pvt engg colleges asked to mend ways

By Issuing Disaffiliation Notice To An Institute For Impersonating Staff, Anna University Has Sent A Message That It Won't Compromise On The Quality Of Education In These Colleges

By Suresh Kumar | TVS

Chennai: The decision of Anna University (Chennai) to issue a disaffiliation notice to the errant management of the PMR Institute of Technology here is seen as a step in the right direction that would prompt colleges to ensure quality in technical education.

For more than three years now self-financing engineering colleges in Tamil Nadu have been allowed a virtual free run with no 'Big Brother' breathing down their necks to maintain worthy standards of education. After the 'era of inspections' during 2010 to 2016 when B Balagurusamy was the vice-chancellor, only now colleges have come under real time scrutiny for quality.

In the case of the PMR Institute, what shocked the authorities was that the management had dared to impersonate faculty members before inspection teams. P Mannar Jawahar, vice-chancellor, Anna University (Chennai) rightly put it that "this is the highest crime in an academic institution."

Over the past five years, self-financing engineering colleges have mushroomed all over the state taking the number from over 200 in 2008 to 354 currently. Another 175 applications for establishing engineering colleges are pending before the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE). It is a known fact that many of these institutions function out of brick and mortar structures with ill-equipped laboratories and teaching facilities.

Professor Jawahar remarked that among the 180 engineering colleges affiliated to the Anna University (Chennai), "only 20 to 25 institutions have secured a weightage of 70% or above in terms of faculty, infrastructure and library stock. Most institutions have performed average with a score of around 50%."

He made it clear that "X colleges

do not have adequate number of faculty members or qualified teachers on their rolls; they came out openly with the facts. Impersonating staff members is a fraud and cannot be accepted."

In the past, managements of private colleges were known to have resorted to dubious means to hoodwink members of inspection teams. "During an inspection a few years ago, we had found that a college had actually borrowed library books from a neighbouring institution and shown it as their stock. From then on, inspection

teams started the practice of randomly putting the college seal on the pages of library books making it impossible for institutions to duplicate the stocks," recalled a professor of the Anna University. Often private institutions fail to realise that they cannot lure students using appealing brochures and publicity material for ever. "The students are after all the best brand ambassadors of an educational institution. If the first batch graduates don't take back good memories of the institutions yet in them, then naturally the word of mouth bad publicity will affect the image of the college. Managements who have been focusing on quality have got the cream of meritorious students. There have been instances where top ranking students had opted for specific branch of engineering in reputable private colleges over other branches in Anna University," a higher education department official observed. Jawahar hopes that the action against the PMR Institute will serve as a warning to other institutions to put their house in order.

Private engineering colleges in and around Chennai that have maintained high standards:

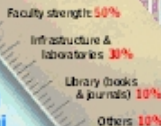
- SSN College of Engineering, Kalavakkam
- Velammal Engineering College, Surapet
- St Joseph's College of Engineering, Chembemcherry
- Meenakshi Sundararajan Engineering College, Kodambakkam
- Sri Sairam Engineering College, West Tambaram

Note: The list is only indicative and not exhaustive. There are other colleges which have very good infrastructure and academic ambience. Some of the reputed colleges also collect a hefty donation for admitting students under the management quota.

THE REQUIREMENTS

Number of self-financing engineering colleges affiliated to Anna University (Chennai): 130

Break-up of weightage given by Anna University (Chennai) while giving affiliated status to a college:



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THE REALITY

Of the 130 colleges, the number of those who scored 70% & above during the assessment for affiliation: 25

The number of colleges with overall score averaging 50%: 100

Most colleges face acute shortage of faculty

In many colleges, BE graduates serve as faculty members due to the shortage

Very few PhD holders among faculty in engineering streams

Libraries and laboratories in many of these private colleges are ill-equipped

Below are the current activities/Scams according to the vice-chancellor, Anna University (Chennai)



If colleges do not have an adequate number of faculty members, they can be open about it. Impersonating staff members is a fraud and unacceptable

P Mannar Jawahar | VICE-CHANCELLOR, ANNA UNIVERSITY (CHENNAI)

Desperate colleges wooing retired Anna Univ professors

By Suresh Kumar | TVS

Chennai: If there is one thing which the moneybags who have established engineering colleges by the dozens in Tamil Nadu cannot easily buy, it is a qualified and trained faculty to handle classes. As it is, very few engineering graduates take to teaching out of passion. Academics point out that often than not, it is the request of the information technology industry who take to higher studies in some institution or the other and land up as teachers at a later stage. This quality deficiency adds to the academic burden of institutions which are battling a shortage of faculty in terms of numbers.

"There is severe shortage of qualified faculty to handle classes for IT, electronics and communication and computer science engineering branches. The number of colleges have expanded. This year there are chances that those who have been laid off by IT companies could come back to teaching," said Harish Mehta, secretary MNM Jain Engineering College.

"Colleges that are keen on improving standards have begun poaching retired professors of the Anna University by offering handsome salaries and perks including accommodation in some cases. Also, many teachers have switched colleges for better offers and retaining talented staff is becoming increasingly difficult," admitted a chairman of an engineering

college in Kanchipuram. There are also many institutions which are not professionally managed where teachers are underpaid.

"On record these colleges claim to pay AICTE fixed pay scales to their teachers but the reality is entirely different. A few years ago when the Anna University found that teachers were asked to sign on a pay slip showing a higher salary while actually they were paid less, we had asked colleges to pay salaries by cheques. But some colleges issued cheques reflecting AICTE pay scales, but forced the teachers to part with a few thousand rupees cash every month," reminisced a university professor.

"To equip teachers handle classes better, the National Institute of Technical Teachers'

Training and Research (NITTTR) in Chennai has been conducting regular faculty improvement programmes.

"We receive requests from a large number of private colleges to conduct training programmes in their institutions. This is worked out economical for the institutions as at one stroke 40 to 50 teachers are trained. However, when we conduct training in our institute, very few respond," said professor B G Barik, director-in-charge, NITTTR.

Anna University (Chennai) vice-chancellor P Mannar Jawahar said that after realising the acute faculty shortage in self-financing institutions, the university had reduced the overall weightage for faculty strength from 60% to 50% during assessment.