CHAPTER THIRTEEN

NON-FACULTY EMPLOYEES

"Trust men and they will be true to you;
treat them greatly,
and they will show themselves great"

R. W. Emerson
(1803-1882)

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The performance of the IITs, like that of any leading university, is aided by a congenial work environment. Faculty, students and non-teaching employees will all then naturally drive themselves to achieve as high a level of productivity as possible. During the visits made by the Committee to all the IITs, there was not a single jarring moment even remotely indicative of any discord between non-faculty employees and the others. The obvious commitment of the IITs to a work environment that enables all sections of the community to perform their respective functions harmoniously made a deep impression on this Committee. Having recorded this heartwarming impression gained by the Committee, we will highlight certain features associated with the non-faculty employees and some of their concerns.

13.1 SUMMARY OF CONCERNS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

13.1.1 Low Academic: Non-academic Staff Ratio

(i) The total strength of the supporting staff in the IITs is about 8025, while the strength of the R&D and Project staff is about 1850. When compared with the total faculty strength of 2375, the number of non-faculty employees in the IITs appears quite large and works out to a ratio of academic to non-academic staff of 1:4 or more.

(ii) The Expenditure Reforms Committee (ERC) has, on the other hand, recommended a ratio of 1:1.5 to 2 for academic: non-academic staff. IITs exceed this ratio. The ERC recommendation is quite general and cannot be strictly applied to IITs, since these institutions have a sizeable population of technical and scientific staff that constitutes a pillar of support to the wide-ranging technical activities in the IITs. The IITs are also residential in character, and this feature adds its own demand for support staff. The alternative of outsourcing has been successfully implemented in the campuses of several academic institutions and the IITs are also getting into this mode. IITs in the metro-cities have an advantage in this respect. However, for IITs in Guwahati and Kharagpur, outsourcing may not be an easy solution for the present.

Notwithstanding what has been stated above, there is a strong case for a review of the number of non-academic staff. The actual number of such staff, after an assessment of the IIT activity profiles and their locational features, need to be gradually reduced through the Special Voluntary Retirement Scheme as implemented by some of the academic institutions in our country.

(iii) There is a total ban on filling non-academic posts. The blanket ban sounds illogical as it does not quite address the pressing needs in a particular cadre, especially where it is related to progressing academic work. There is a case, therefore, for providing for exemptions of the ban when a strong justification is provided by any of the IITs for filling certain vacancies.

(iv) In this context it is important to differentiate between the needed and the productive staff on the one hand and the unproductive and the not-so-needed staff. If the number of project staff increases, the research performance, to which they directly contribute, improves. This is reflected in the correlation shown in Figure 13.1
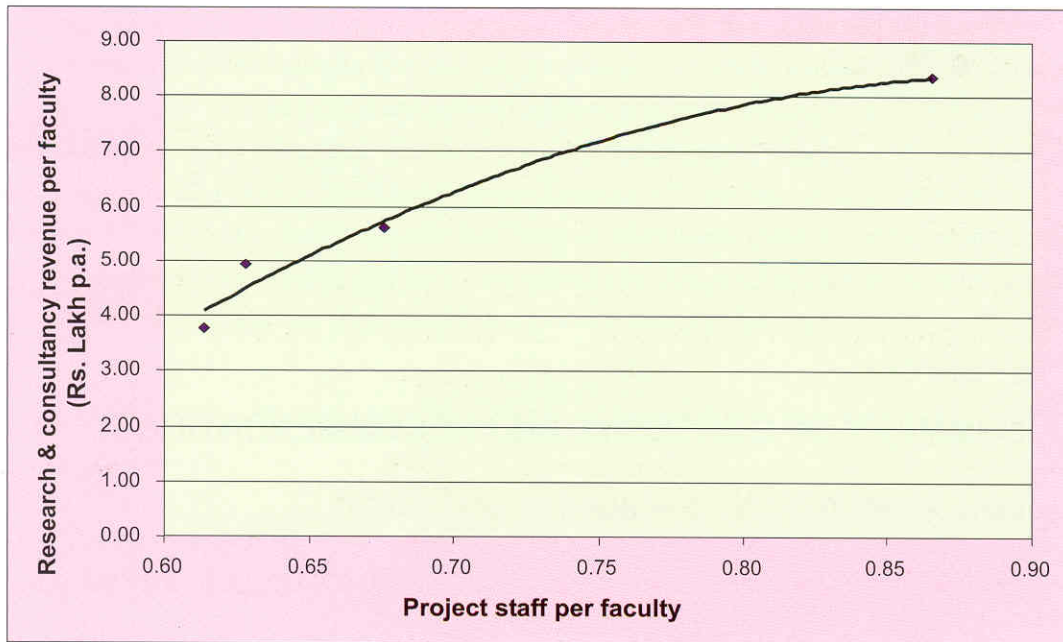

Figure 13.1: Project staff contribution to revenue realisation

13.1.2 Technology in Management

The IITs, being technologically strong institutions, have implemented the use of information technology devices for administrative purposes as well. Even so, it is not absolutely clear that IITs operate an automated system in regard to administrative and personnel matters as well as their accounting and financing processes. Similarly there is a need for an efficient and comprehensive management information system in the IITs. In all these respects, total modernization requires not only installation of advanced hardware and software systems, but also training and retraining of the staff. The Committee is confident that staff well trained in the daily use of modern and continuously updated technology will contribute significantly to higher productivity.

13.1.3 Staff Development and Training

All IITs should spend a reasonable proportion (not less than 2%) of their maintenance budget on staff training and skill development. Senior staff training would be appropriate in areas such as management and behavioural aspects besides IT usage mentioned above. For staff in the workshops and the technical staff, exposure to and training in the use of modern power tools and automated machinery would be relevant. Training office and finance staff to render them adept at exploiting

the power of the computer software in their daily work would also be an asset to the IITs.

Such training activities for lower staff could be organized at the institute level. For medium and lower level staff officers, such staff training and development activities are better organized centrally and at an appropriate location outside the IITs by pooling resources drawn from all the IITs. This step is likely to facilitate experience-sharing across the IITs.

13.1.4 Cadre Structure

Compared to the fast track promotion avenues available for faculty, non-academic staff in the IITs have very few promotional avenues. This problem can be addressed by a comprehensive review of the cadre structures of the non-academic staff in the IITs.

Further, with use of new technology, larger numbers of positions are required at the supervisory level. Therefore, there could be a review of cadre structure in all IITs so that suitable senior supervisory posts can be created in lieu of lower positions. There is also a need for review of recruitment rules to go with the changing work environment. Greater freedom needs to be given to IITs in terms of non-academic staff structures without, however, increasing the overall numbers or budgetary support.

13.1.5 Pay Scales

(i)   The IITs had introduced and implemented Personal Promotion Scheme for non-faculty Group A, B, C and D staff. These differed in detail from one IIT to another IIT. Staff demands arose primarily from comparisons across IITs. The Council of IITs, therefore, laid down uniform ground rules which are equitable to the staff. The Council has approved three schemes viz. the Personal Promotion Scheme (PPS) for Group A, B, C & D staff, the Recruitment and Career Development Scheme (RCDS) and currently the Modified Assured Career Progression Scheme (MACPS) for Group B, C & D staff.

(ii)   The pay scales adopted under RCDS and MACPS vary widely for the common categories of both technical and non-technical staff. The MHRD, while implementing the Fifth Central Pay Commission scales, stipulated as follows: "where pay scales and conditions of service are different from those available to the corresponding categories of the employees of the Central Government, it has been decided that the replacement pay scales to the pay scales which have been extended to the existing incumbents may be given as personal to the present incumbents of those posts on the consideration that they have already been drawing benefits of the grade in the pre-revised scale. It is to be ensured that once the present incumbent vacates the post on account of retirements, superannuation, death, resignation or promotion, the pay scales of such posts should revert to the level of approved scales in the Government for corresponding categories. New recruitment and promotion would also take place at the level of scales approved by the Govt. of India."

(iii) The RCDS scales are higher than MACPS scales in quite a few cases. Hence, by implementation of this rule, multiple scales have come into existence in the IITs. This is exemplified in the following table:

ENTRY LEVEL	Ladder 1	Ladder 2
Mechanic/Lab. Asst. 3050-4590 3200-4900	Senior Mech./Sr.Lab. Asst. 4000-6000 4500-7000	Technical Assistant 5000-8000 5500-9000
Assistant 5000-8000 5500-9000	Superintendent 5500-9000 6500-10500	Sr. Supdt./Section Officer 6500-10500 7500-12000
Technical Assistant 5000-8000 5500-9000	Senior Tech. Asst. 5500-9000 6500-10500	Technical Officer 6500-10500 7500-12000

(iv) The IITs are relatively small autonomous institutions which cater to the national and international requirements of scientific and technical manpower. In such institutions, there is little scope for the employees to have promotional avenues. It has been reported that the lower scales under MACPS have made the employees aggrieved and their Associations are now blocking the implementation of the MACP Scheme.

(v) Secondly, the Government has three promotional avenues for its employees viz. (1) Vacancy based recruitment, (2) Vacancy based promotion and (3) Assured Career Progression Scheme, whereas vacancy based promotional avenues are not adopted for the IIT employees.

(vi) Thirdly, the employees who have had two reviews after 16 years (8+8) in the previous promotion schemes are stagnating in a single scale for more than 10 years till their date of retirement. This is a source of considerable grievance.

(vii) As far as Group A Officers in the IITs are concerned, there is no clear-cut policy or scheme for the Cadre Review after 1993. Therefore, it is necessary to evolve a scheme as in the case of Group A Officers of the GOl.

IIT Council can help in finding solutions to the concerns mentioned in this chapter.