

INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHANGE

Genesis

“I now want to utilise some of my time in building up a third institution in the field of social sciences, in addition to the two which I have helped to build, namely, the Delhi School of Economics and the Institute of Economic Growth. As I have built these two institutions in the north, I want to establish the third one in the south. Bangalore is an ideal place for its location.”

Thus spoke V K R V Rao, thirty five years back

Vision

“Social planning could be thought of under the following heads:

- As a complement and a corrective to economic development
- As an integrated planning of the different social services sectors
- As the planning of different sectors of activity, both economic and social for the fulfillment of specific social targets or the uplift of specific backward sections of society
- As overall social planning for social change and social reconstruction”

This vision of Prof. VKRV Rao, led to naming the Institute as Institute for Social and Economic Change.

The Institute for Social and Economic Change (ISEC) is an autonomous research body, founded in 1972. It arose out of ambition and enthusiasm by a group of eminent social scientists led by Prof. V.K.R.V. Rao, to establish an all-India institute of interdisciplinary research and training in social sciences in the southern part of the country. Their enthusiasm was matched by the earnest desire of the Government of Karnataka to establish an important centre for social science research, and the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) responded in equal measure. Thus, within a short span of time, a group of eminent social scientists, led by Prof. Rao mobilised the necessary material support from the Union Government as well as the Government of Karnataka and got a team of dedicated researchers to spur social science research in Bangalore. This was one of the first and largest institutions to be established under the ICSSR. Soon after its establishment, ISEC became a premier institution for undertaking multi-disciplinary research and training in social sciences.

The Institute is established with the principal objective of conducting research and training in social sciences. Through both macro and micro-level studies with interdisciplinary approaches the Institute's mandate is to generate knowledge and provide information to improve the quality of policy-making and to serve as a centre for advanced research and training in social sciences. The main objectives of the Institute are to:

- promote pure and applied research in social and economic development and change encompassing all aspects of a developing society in an inter-disciplinary framework. These include studies on economic, ecological, sociological, demographic, educational and administrative problems and political issues of the country;
- assist central, state and local governments by providing advice based on policy-related studies;
- undertake regular training of doctoral students and teachers in universities and colleges. The Institute should also undertake training programmes for the officials and political functionaries, particularly at local levels to upgrade their skills and make them aware of social and economic issues;
- maintain a documentation and data centre in social sciences;
- assist the multilateral organisations such as the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, UN (ESCAP), UNICEF, UNESCO, ILO and the like in undertaking research and training programmes, and
- collaborate with universities, research institutions and the non-governmental organisations (NGO) in the region in improving the quality of research and training.

By fulfilling these objectives, the Institute is required to play the role of a catalyst in social and economic transformation in the country.

Location and Facilities

ISEC is located in a sylvan 16-hectare campus at Nagarabhavi, abutting the Bangalore University's 'Jnanabharati' premises on the south-western outskirts of the city. Besides the academic, library and administrative complex, the hostels for the students and guesthouse for the visiting scholars, the campus has a residential facility for 77 faculty and staff of the Institute. It also has well-equipped seminar halls, conference dining hall, and a 300-seater auditorium. The Institute's campus is well maintained with sprawling gardens and lawns and a variety of flora and fauna. The Bangalore Urban Arts Commission has

judged the Institute's campus as one of the best maintained campuses in the city of Bangalore consistently during the last three years.

Administrative setup

The Director is the Chief Executive of the Institute. The Board of Governors, which meets three times a year makes all policy decisions. The members of the Board consist of 10 elected representatives from Founding/Life Members, 4 co-opted members, Director ISEC, VC Bangalore University, Principal Secretaries of Finance, Planning and Higher Education in Karnataka, a representative each of the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Ministry of Finance, Government of India and the ICSSR. Two elected representatives of the faculty are also in the Board.

Employee participation in decision making is a hallmark at ISEC. In implementing various policies, the Director is assisted by various statutory committees.

Faculty

The Institute has a well-qualified faculty of 42 in different areas of social sciences, comprising 9 Professors, 14 Associate Professors and 19 Assistant Professors (including a Data Bank manager) besides the Director. Almost all faculty members have doctorate degrees in different disciplines.

The main desire of the Faculty at ISEC is to maintain the Institute at the international level as a Centre of excellence in the field of social sciences. While this focus continues, concentration on Karnataka's development stems undoubtedly from the conviction that unless values and research in social sciences are deeply rooted in the facts and problems of a specific region, it will not be useful either for dealing with the problems of other States and regions in the country or for making fundamental strides in the disciplines concerned. Accordingly, the Institute brings together scholars and practitioners in different disciplines - agricultural development and rural transformation, demography, ecology, economics, education, development administration, and sociology.

The Institute faculty uses a wide range avenues to disseminate and outreach their research outputs so as to bring all the stakeholders including policy makers together for building a sustainable and growing society.

Institute's canopy

The research activities of the Institute are organised in terms of different Units and programmes. The Units are: Economics (ECON), Ecology Economics (EE), RBI, Agricultural Development and Rural Transformation (ADRT), Population Research Centre (PRC), Sociology (SOC), Decentralisation and Development (DDU), Development Administration (DA), and Education (EDN). The ADRT Unit is financed by the Ministry of Agriculture, the PRC Unit is financed by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. The RBI Unit is financed by an Endowment donated by the RBI. The DDU is financed by a grant from the Ford Foundation. The other Units are financed through annual block grants from the ICSSR/MHRD and the Government of Karnataka as well as from savings generated from grants for specific projects by international agencies.

ISEC has also promoted a Centre of Excellence in the field of environment and development. Centre for Inter-disciplinary Studies in Environment and Development (CISED) operates within the campus of ISEC, very closely working with ISEC faculty in research and training.

Portfolios of Products and Services

The Institute, through its various activities has been impacting on society in the following ways.

- Contributing to the understanding of economy, polity and society and its dissemination to public through publications;
- assisting and advising, particularly at the State and local levels, in the design and implementation of policies, through policy research and evaluation studies;
- directly influencing government policies as Chairpersons and members of various commissions, committees and working groups;

- imparting training to government officials on subjects relevant to them from time to time to enable them to understand the philosophy and rationale behind design and implementation of various policies;
- undertaking comprehensive training programmes to functionaries of decentralised government, particularly to District Panchayat functionaries.
- Interacting with the NGOs to bring in action orientation to research and to train the functionaries to enable them to improve their own task;
- Training social scientists through a rigorous and structured programme leading to doctoral degrees in all disciplines in social sciences;
- Imparting advanced training to university and college teachers and social scientists to equip them with the latest developments in the respective fields to impact on the quality of teaching and research in the region;
- arranging public lectures by eminent social scientists on important political, social and economic issues and developments confronting the country and the region;
- working closely with the private sector and helping the Chambers of Commerce and Industry and Confederation of Indian Industry and other organisations of entrepreneurs and preparing them for the emerging business environment like the implications of WTO or the introduction of value added tax.

Thrust Areas of Research

The Institute tunes its research agenda on a five year basis. The thrust areas of research for the years 2004-2010 are:

- Macro-economic reforms including public finance
- Sectoral Reforms with special reference to Agriculture and rural development; Human development and social services; Education; Environment and natural resources; Infrastructure, industry and technology;
- Globalisation and its impacts on Indian economy and society,
- Democratic Decentralisation and Development, Good Governance and public policy
- Social systems and change: Studies on Gender and vulnerable sections.

Ph.D.Programme

One of the important objectives of the Institute is to undertake regular training and guiding doctoral students. The Institute is affiliated to Bangalore University, University of Mysore, Central University of Hyderabad, Mangalore University and Karnatak University. Over the years, 87 students have secured doctoral degrees from ISEC in various social science disciplines.

The Ph.D. programme in ISEC is a unique one. The students are selected from all over the country on the basis of tests and interviews. On average about 10-12 students are taken per year, from major disciplines such as economics, sociology, political science, education, demography and statistics. This is followed by a pre-Ph.D. training course for one year in which, besides imparting advanced grounding in theory, quantitative techniques and research methodology, an inter-disciplinary perspective are imparted by arranging special lectures by eminent personalities. The students are allowed to register and work on their theses only after successfully completing the pre-Ph.D. course. The course is being continuously modernised and updated to keep up with the most recent developments. Significant upgradation in the teaching programme has been accomplished recently by revising of the syllabi and inviting professors from all over the world to teach in the courses.

Biannual Seminars of Ph D Fellows of ISEC

All the Ph D Fellows of ISEC are required to present two seminars every year (in June and December). The pre-submission (final) seminar presentations are also held then. There will be two subject experts for every Ph D Fellow's presentation as Panel Members. All the faculty of the Institute, a few renowned resource persons and the Doctoral Committee members besides the supervisors are invited for the seminars. Based on the critical comments and suggestions the students are required to prepare their thesis. The thesis is forward to the concerned University only after the student makes a pre-submission seminar presentation. The written comments of the subject experts are made available to the students.

ICSSR Fellowships

All doctoral students at ISEC are supported with fellowships and contingency allowances. The ICSSR has allotted six fellowships to the Institute from 2004-05. Of the six five are institutional fellowships while one is a Teacher Fellowship with salary protection. The ICSSR provides the fellowship only for 3 years; however, the Institute makes all efforts to support all the doctoral students upto four years of their studies.

Refresher Courses/Training Programmes

The Institute is also involved in imparting training programmes to university and college teachers as well as administrators at different levels. This is one of the important centres recognised by the University Grants Commission (UGC) to undertake refresher programmes for the university and college teachers, and every year these programmes are undertaken in economics, sociology, political science and education. Under the World Bank-aided capacity building programme on ecological economics and South Asian Network in Development and Environmental Economics, the Institute is one of the recognised centres for imparting training to teachers, researcher and government officials. The Institute also undertakes refresher courses in quantitative techniques and computer applications for teachers and researchers in social sciences, under the ICSSR program. There are also training programmes organised at the request of the state and central governments for government officials on various contemporary issues such as the Value Added Tax (VAT), the property tax, WTO and India, Environmental economics, making rural bank people oriented, fiscal disciplines in PRIs and so on. Likewise courses are organised for NGOs such as Action-Aid. Another innovative programme is the field training for the rural marketing management trainees of Hindustan Lever. The trainees, after a short orientation course, are taken to the identified villages to implement specified programmes/activities.

ISEC has recently taken up training the Masters degree students from Lund University, Sweden, on a partnership basis. The Institute has also been participating in the important task of capacity building in rural areas and has undertaken to train a large number of elected representatives of district panchayats. There has been an incessant request to undertake short-term training programme for the elected representatives of district panchayats from virtually all the districts of the State. It has also introduced an innovative programme of training private sector officers.

Library

The ISEC library has an impressive collection of books, official and non-official documents and back volumes of professional journals and periodicals. It has more than 100,000 titles and 335 microfiche copies of periodicals. About 350 professional foreign and

Indian journals are being subscribed. The World Bank and a number of other international organisations have recognised it as a Depository Library. A notable treasure of the library is the collection of valuable books as a bequest from Bharat Ratna Sir. M. Visveswaraya. This is considered to be one of the best reference libraries in social sciences in the south of the country. The ISEC library has been fully computerised.

The project of the ISEC library computerization was successfully completed in the month of March 2003 by digitizing all the library bibliographical data through CDS-ISIS Software. Later the developed library database was converted into LIBSYS integrated library software 4(Rel.50) (Client-Server Version) on Pentium based Server under LINUX Operating system with unlimited collection option and unlimited number of users with Web OPAC facility. The library data-base can be accessed on-line. This facility is available to the faculty through LAN. Library had acquired a "DATAMAX" Thermal Transfer Printer and a CCD Scanner at circulation counter towards performing charging and discharging systems through barcode technology.

Library has started acquiring important CDs on different social and economic aspects from various renowned organizations/publishers situated around the world. As on today, our library had acquired more than 200 CDs and these are displayed in the central hall of the library for easy access to our user community.

All the Library staff members have undergone training programmes on "LIBSYS house keeping operations" for performing all the library operations through LIBSYS library software. Selected professional staff members are continuously deputed from time and again for participating in the training programme on library related computer technology topics i.e., DSPACE, HTML and MYLIBRARY.

ISEC library has a wide range of exchange programmes, in terms of exchanging publications, discussion papers, working papers etc.

Networking

ISEC maintains close functional linkages with ministries of central and state governments. It actively collaborates with multi-lateral agencies such as the World Bank, UN (ESCAP), and ADB, aid agencies like Swiss Agency for Development and Co-operation (SDC), Department of International Development (DFID), the Ford Foundation, GTZ and MacArthur Foundation. ISEC provides policy inputs through various studies and actively collaborates with the State Government particularly the Departments of Finance, Planning, Education, water resources, and Rural Development, NHRC, ISRO and so on. Likewise, network based activities are being organised with CMDR, CESS, NIRD, NIPFP, CDS, IIFM and several universities in the country. The faculty members of ISEC have served as chairmen and members of various committees and study groups appointed by the central and state governments.

Information Dissemination

The Institute has set up a data bank for storing both secondary and primary data collected for several projects with a Data Bank Manager and an Information Technology Officer. These data are properly classified and stored in a user-friendly manner for use by researchers within and outside the Institute, some on-line otherwise in CD forms. The data bank has already compiled information on Central and State finances and has helped to improve the research productivity. It has also started servicing the researchers as well as government agencies in Karnataka. When fully operational, the data bank intends to put together all the basic data on the Indian economy, polity and society in one place. This has not only improved the productivity of the Institute, but also provides useful service to the researchers. Eventually it is proposed to be self-financing by marketing its products to government departments and researchers in the region.

Publications

The biggest impact of ISEC on society is dissemination of the results of its research studies. During the last three decades of its existence, the Institute has completed over 700 different studies on wide-ranging topics in social sciences. These cover applied and policy-related studies on various economic, social, political and administrative issues. The faculty

of the Institute has published about 250 books and over 3,000 technical articles. Of these, over 600 articles are published in refereed journals in India and abroad, 900 articles in various magazines and about 1,000 articles are presented in seminars and workshops. Besides these, the faculty has been regularly contributing to leading newspapers to raise the standard of public debate and to influence public opinion on many a contemporary issue.

ISEC Journal and News Letter

Among its manifold contributions, is an interdisciplinary bi-annual journal in social sciences, which ISEC started in 1998. The *Journal of Social and Economic Development*, is now in its sixth year of publication. This is a refereed journal with an all-India focus and not a mere outlet for the publication of the research findings of the faculty. Papers are invited from all social scientists and are published after a proper refereeing. The editorial committee of the journal comprises eminent social scientists. The subscription to the journal has been growing steadily, and currently there are over 300 subscriptions within and outside the country. Institute proposes to have special issues of the journal dedicated to specific themes so as to generate debate and concern pertaining to critical issues in economy, society and polity.

Institute brings out regularly a half-yearly newsletter detailing the research and training programme activities, outreach and dissemination activities, current events and other information of new values.

Working Papers/ Monographs

With a view to disseminating the results of ongoing research, the Institute has rejuvenated the Working Paper series in 1999. The working papers are published after they are refereed and copy-edited. Till now 159 working papers have been brought out so far, after duly refereeing before publication. These papers have been well received by scholars in social sciences and policy makers alike. These publications are shared widely with other social science research institutions. The Institute has so far brought out seven Monographs.

Seminars/Conferences/Workshops/Symposia

The Institute has also been collaborating with a number of international agencies in organising conferences and seminars in Bangalore. It collaborated with the World Bank Institute in organising a three-day workshop on “Decentralisation and Making of Sub-national Policy” in May 1999. Coming very close in time, very recently ISEC organised an international conference on “Biotechnology and India’s Development”, jointly with NOW/IDPAD and ICSSR. Conferences are organised for The Indian Society for Ecological Economics, Indian Labour Economics Association, Indian Econometric Society, the Indian Association of Social Science Institutions (IASSI) and so on. International seminars such as the one on “Poverty and Public Policy” sponsored by several national and international agencies, “Indian Development”, sponsored by Stanford University, Development Convention of southern ICSSR institutions and several more are organized in the recent past. There have also been several workshops and seminars on issues relating to sub-national tax reforms, policy and institutional issues related to good governance, World Trade Organisation (WTO) and Indian Agriculture, WTO and problems of Child Labour, Lokayukta, Designing of Activity Mapping for PRIs, Millennium Assessment of Agricultural Sector, E-governance and rural development, Capacity Building in Budget Analysis and so on.

Research Projects

Research projects in the Institute follow a project cycle. They are to be approved by the Academic Research and Program Committee. Faculty take up projects on their own interest, or linked to the interests of sponsors or funding agencies. In soliciting sponsored projects, however, the Institute has taken due care to ensure minimum compromise on academic merits. On average about 25 projects are completed per year, and another 25-30 are approved as new projects. Most of the projects undertaken have been for Central and State government agencies, the Ford Foundation, Swiss Agency for Development Corporation (SDC), Mac Arthur Foundation, the Sir Ratan Tata Trust (SRTT), the World Bank and other international agencies. There were important research projects on decentralisation and governance funded by the Ford Foundation since 1996 which have

emerged into a major Unit undertaking research and training in fiscal, political, administrative, and sociological aspects of decentralisation. Similar studies in the recent past were on Ecology, Economics and Institutions, Rural Livelihood Systems, Estimating Expenditure Needs of the States (for the Eleventh Finance Commission), WTO Cell Report, Report on Farmers' Suicides and several others. Currently, the Institute is completing Karnataka Development Report, and components of Karnataka Human Development Report. Recently, ISEC also contributed to the preparation of Karnataka State Environment Report and High Power Committee Report on Redressal of Regional Imbalances, Task Force Report on Primary and Higher Education, and so on. Besides these, there are a large number of policy-related studies sponsored by various Central and State ministries and the Planning Commission. So far over 700 such studies have been completed.

Sir Ratan Tata Trust Endowment Fund

After three years of initial support on modernisation and capacity building at ISEC, Sir Ratan Tata Trust has created a permanent endowment of Rs. 3.00 crores at ISEC to carry out the same set of activities of addressing higher education for servicing the society.

1 This fund is being utilised essentially for capacity building and networking among social sciences fraternity at ISEC and in the country. In respect of capacity building, the Institute has taken four major initiatives as follows:

- (a) Dissemination of ISEC research findings to public and to policy-makers nationally and internationally through publication.
- (b) Capacity building for ISEC faculty by enabling them to undertake field research in collaboration with other institutions and with specialists in other disciplines drawn both from within and outside of Karnataka.
- (c) Contributing and upgrading research and teaching capacities in Universities, research institutions, in bureaucracy and the NGOs through specially organised training programmes/workshops.
- (d) Creating an interactive network with several research institutions in the country including ISRO, CMDR, IIFM, IISc., UAS Bangalore, IIMB, NIAS, ICSSR etc.

2. The impetus provided by the SRTT has also led to a significantly increased the Institute's visibility and involvement in the public space by organising public lectures by eminent persons, actively being involved in the preparation of the major documents relating to the status of overall development, human development and the state of environment in Karnataka, conduct of special seminars and workshops for official and non-official organisations and academic bodies, and training programmes. for local panchayat board official bearers, NGOs and research scholars.
3. The tightening of procedures for clearance and monitoring the progress of Research projects, insistence on project staff giving seminars both at the inception and completion of their project work and making a stricter review of draft report by two outside referees mandatory are major steps.

Dr. V.K.R.V.Rao Chair

In 1997, Ministry of Finance, Government of India gave ISEC a corpus of Rs. one crore. A part of the interest income from the corpus is utilised to fund the Dr. V.K.R.V.Rao Chair since 1997. So far Professors T N Srinivasan, Kaushik Basu, Arvind Panagariya and Ravi Kanbur have held this chair and brought significant changes in the academic content and visibility of the Institute.

Dr. V.K.R.V.Rao Prizes

The Institute has established three prizes in the name of Dr. V.K.R.V.Rao to be awarded annually to persons who have made significant contributions to human knowledge and progress in the disciplines of Demography, Economics, Education, History, Human Geography, Linguistics, Political Science, Psychology, Public Administration and Sociology. One prize is awarded in Economics while the two other prizes are rotated among other disciplines. The ICSSR is entrusted with the selection of the awards.

Dr. D.M. Nanjundappa Endowment Fund Prizes

Two endowment Prizes, established in 1993, by the distinguished academician and educationist Dr D M Nanjundappa, are awarded annually. One prize goes to an Economics Ph D student and another to a non-Economics student securing the highest marks in the Pre-Ph D Examination.

Dr.M.N. Srinivas and Justice E.S. Venkataramiah Endowment Prizes

One prize is awarded once in five years for the best Ph D theses in the Institute in Sociology and Development Administration respectively.

Dr. V.K.R.V.Rao Memorial Lecture

A lecture is organised on the Founder's Day of the Institute i.e., on 20th January every year in memory of Dr. V.K.R.V.Rao. An eminent person is invited to deliver this Lecture.

Dr. L.S. Venkataramanan Memorial Lecture

An annual Endowment Lecture honours the memory of an eminent agricultural economist who was formerly Director of the Institute.

Rajyotsava Extension Lecture

ISEC organises a prestigious lecture in November every year as a part of celebration in the State to commemorate the founding day of the State of Karnataka. Lectures have been delivered on a variety of themes by prominent citizens of Karnataka.

Funding

ISEC receives annual grant-in-aid from ICSSR (Ministry of Human Resources Development, Government of India) and the Government of Karnataka. The Ministries of Agriculture, and Health and Family Welfare, Government of India, have funded Units in ISEC to undertake studies on agriculture and rural development, and population policy respectively. The Reserve Bank of India has instituted a Chair in the Institute. ISEC has a

major research programme on ‘Decentralisation and Governance’, funded by Ford Foundation. Sir Ratan Tata Trust has generously contributed to the corpus of the Institute.

ISEC Website: isec.ac.in

The ISEC website contains details of the Institute’s functions and objectives, management, thrust areas of research, Ph.D. programmes, academic units, and on-line library and data bank information.

For further information, please get in touch with

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