



INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHANGE
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I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the culture of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any of them

M.K.Gandhi.

1. A Quarter Century of ISEC Activity

1.1 *Historical Background:*

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 inter-disciplinary research and training in social sciences.

The Institute was established with the principal objective of conducting research, pure and applied, in social sciences. The desire of the founding fathers was to create an institution of excellence, employing interdisciplinary approaches to analyse critical issues affecting the transformation of economy, polity and society. Through both macro and micro-level studies, the Institute's mandate was 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:

- undertake pure and applied research in social sciences 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 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, and
- take all measures within the competence of the Institute for the promotion of pure and applied research in social and economic development and change.
- Assist the multilateral organisations such as the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, UN (ESCAP), UNICEF and ILO in undertaking research and training programmes.
- Collaborating 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.

1.2 Overview of Activity:

Right from its inception in 1972, ISEC's focus has been to undertake inter-disciplinary research in social sciences to understand the complex process of social and economic transformation. The micro-level studies based on primary data collected in Tumkur district, the landmark study based on the Bangalore city survey conducted by the Institute and the famous masterpiece by Prof. M.N. Srinivas, *The Remembered Village*, were some of the well-known contributions. Over the years, the Institute has acquired a name for itself through micro-level studies of economy, polity and society. Its concern for social welfare of the poor and disadvantaged groups has been strongly reflected in the large number of studies undertaken to understand various dimensions of poverty and human development. There have also been analytical and applied researches particularly in policy-related areas. The governments, at the central, state and local levels have been relying on the Institute for studies on evaluation of various policies and programmes.

ISEC was one of five research institutions initially funded by the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), with matching contributions from Government of Karnataka. However, as the number of institutions under the ICSSR support increased, the amount of assistance declined even in nominal terms. Thus, the share of the ICSSR support in the total budget of the Institute plummeted year after year. However, the State government in recognition of ISEC's valuable research contribution steadily increased its support. Yet, as the State's own finances came under increasing pressure, the volume of assistance fell short of the requirements. Thus, in 1998–99, the ICSSR funds constituted about 6 per cent of total expenditures and the share of the State government constituted about 25 per cent of total expenditure of the Institute.

In addition to the core-funded activities, with the passage of time, the Institute was able to get the support of Reserve Bank of India to endow a Chair on Macroeconomic policy. The Union Ministry of Agriculture established one of its agro-economic research centres called Agricultural Development and Rural Transformation (ADRT) unit. Ministry of Health and Family Welfare also established a Population Research Centre (PRC) in the Institute. In addition, the Karnataka State government has established a Chair to study commercial tax system in the State. Thus, over the years, the Institute was able to get the support of a number of donors.

To meet the increasing funding requirements to carry on the core activities and upgrade the infrastructure, the Institute had to take up several sponsored projects. Thus, in 1998–99, revenue from sponsored projects constituted about 46 per cent of total revenues. The core funding by the State government and the ICSSR and the endowed Chairs and Units together generated 54 per cent of the revenues. In soliciting sponsored projects, however, the Institute has taken care to ensure minimum compromise. 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 World Bank and other international agencies. There are 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. Similarly, a study funded by the Mac Arthur Foundation on ecology, economics and institutions is underway. SDC has been funding an important initiative on Rural Livelihood Systems. The Institute has recently completed a study on “Estimating Expenditure Needs of the States” for the Eleventh Finance Commission. Besides these, there are a large number of policy-related studies sponsored by various Central and State ministries and the Planning Commission.

Although attempts have been made to ensure that *projectitis* does not adversely affect the quality of research it has become increasingly difficult to maintain the standards. As mentioned earlier, taking sponsored projects to maintain the flow of funds and to get adequate access to computer and other facilities has become inevitable. A major adverse impact of the financial constraint has been reduced allocation to the library. Consequently, there is a significant backlog in acquisition of volumes, subscription to some important journals has had to be discontinued and the plan for computerising the library has remained largely on paper.

1.3 Infrastructure 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 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 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.

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 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. As many as 2,679 scholars from various institutions visited the library in 1999 for referencing. However, the prevailing colon classification system is user-unfriendly and books and documents need to be reclassified into decimal classification. Attempts are also underway to computerise the library and place it online. However, constraint on resources has slowed down this process and has made it difficult to acquire new titles and some important journals.

A major challenge in the fast-changing environment is to get adequate access to computer hardware and software, e-mail and internet facilities. The Institute has had to acquire computers mainly by undertaking externally funded projects. Nevertheless, the prevailing computer facility is inadequate and significant investment is needed to upgrade the facility. Although many of the faculty members have been provided with computers, most of the machines are old, have low memory, and need to be replaced. In fact, for 40 doctoral students, there are just five computers at present.

The first phase of networking has been completed by linking the computers with a local area network (LAN) to provide access to e-mail and internet facilities. However, significant augmentation of the facilities is required to provide satisfactory service. Attempts are on to improve the service by getting a dedicated line for the internet and a separate server for e-mail. The library computerisation will be taken up shortly and will be completed in a planned manner. To minimise loss of productivity due to frequent power interruptions and outages, the Institute has recently acquired a diesel generator.

ISEC has four seminar halls, a committee room and an auditorium. However, due to shortage of office space, two seminar halls have been converted into project offices. While the facilities in the seminar halls are just about adequate, significant investments will have to be made to keep up with changes in technology. The auditorium is in need of major repairs as it has suffered lack of maintenance over the years. Similarly, substantial investments will have to be made to improve the guesthouse and the students' hostels. Portions of guesthouse and students' hostel have been refurbished in 1999 from the funds received from the Planning Commission in 1999. Substantial additional investments are necessary to refurbish the main academic cum research complex, library and auditorium and the guesthouse.

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 will be properly classified and stored in a user-friendly manner for use by researchers within and outside the Institute. 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 the tax reforms commission in Karnataka. When fully operational, the data bank will put together all the basic data on the Indian economy, polity and society in one place. This will not only improve the productivity of the Institute, but will also provide 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.

1.4 Faculty and staff:

The Institute has a well-qualified faculty of 43 in different areas of social sciences, comprising 8 Professors, 10 Associate Professors and 24 Assistant Professors (including a Data Bank manager) besides the Director (Annexure 1). Owing to financial constraints, 12 faculty positions consisting of one professor, 8 Associate professors and 3 Assistant Professors have not been filled for the last two years. Almost all faculty members have doctorate degrees. In addition to faculty, there are 13 professional staff members comprising one Associate Editor, 2 research analysts, 7 technical assistants and 3 field investigators. The library of the Institute is managed by the Deputy Librarian and has an Assistant Librarian, a professional assistant and a documentalist.

The selection for different positions in the Institute is done on the basis of open advertisement and competition. In the past the research analysts and field investigators completing Ph. D degree were given promotion after a review process. However, following the guidelines issued by the Ministry of Human Resources development, with the introduction of the new pay scales this has been withdrawn. A certain number of positions are reserved for disadvantaged groups as per the Central government rules. The Board of Governors determines pay and allowances of the employees. The academic employees receive pay scales equivalent to those of their counterparts in universities. The non-academic employees receive pay scales equivalent to those in comparable categories in the State government. All academic positions are filled through open advertisement and competition.

In addition to the professional staff and faculty, there are about 90 members of staff working in the administration in various capacities. The Registrar of the Institute is in charge of administration. Although managing the large estate and infrastructure has necessitated keeping relatively large administrative staff, concerted attempts are being made to contract out some of the services such as security and gardening. The Institute's canteen was contracted out last year and attempts are being made to contract out certain other facilities like security and gardening.

1.5 Management and operation systems:

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 11 elected representatives from Founding/Life Members, 2 co-opted members, Principal Secretaries of Finance, Planning and Higher Education in Karnataka, a representative each of the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India and the ICSSR. Two elected representatives of the faculty are also in the Board.

The Board of Governors has the responsibility of providing a policy framework. It meets once in at least four months. The Board meetings are presided over by the Chairman of the Board, who is chosen by the Members. The Governor of the State is the President of the Institute. The Governor presides over the annual meeting of the General Body, which is constituted by the Founding/Life members of the Institute.

The Search Committee constituted by the President of the Institute chooses the Director of the Institute for a period of five years. The Governor appoints the Search Committee consisting of three eminent social scientists in the country, which, after discussion with the faculty, the Board and other eminent personalities connected with the Institute, identifies a panel of names. Based on the recommendation of the Committee, the Governor appoints the Director.

ISEC has been fortunate to have a succession of eminent social scientists as its Director right from its inception. Prof. V.K.R.V. Rao was its first Director. The succeeding Directors consisted of well-known social scientists and administrators. These include Dr. L. S. Venkataramanan, Dr. G. Thimmiah, Mr. T. R. Satishchandran and Dr. P. V. Sheno. The present Director, Dr. M. Govinda Rao, is the eighth in line and he took charge on December 21, 1998. Dr. Rao was a professor at National Institute of Public Finance and Policy, New Delhi, for ten years; Economic Adviser, Finance Commission, Government of India, for three years; and Fellow at Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, The Australian National University, Canberra for about four years, prior to his assuming charge as the Director of ISEC.

The present Chairman of the Board of Governors is Mr. M. Panduranga Setty, an educationist and an industrialist, who has been associated with the institution right from its inception.

Employee participation in decision making is a hallmark at ISEC. In implementing various policies, the Director is assisted by various statutory committees. The Academic Committee of the Institute decides its academic agenda. The Research Programme Committee takes decision on various research activities of the Institute and monitors the progress of research projects. In both the committees, all professors and the Registrar are members. Besides, there is adequate representation to Associate and Assistant Professors who are nominated as members on rotation. The Director is the Chairman of these committees and one of the professors on rotation is the Vice-chairman. The Library Committee takes all policy decisions regarding the library. There is a Joint Consultative Committee comprising of a few nominated (by rotation) members of faculty, academic and administrative staff to assist decision making in administrative matters.

Besides these statutory committees, to assist the Director in administrative matters, there is an administrative committee represented by different categories of employees. The computer committee takes decisions in respect of all matters relating to computerisation and networking in the Institute.

1.6 Impact on the society:

The basic objective of ISEC is to understand the process of social and economic transformation and act as a catalyst in this by closely interacting with society. The Institute, through its various activities has impacted on society in the following ways.

- Contributing to the understanding of economy, polity and society and its dissemination to the 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.

The biggest impact of ISEC on society is dissemination of the results of its research studies. During the last twenty-eight years of its existence, the Institute has completed a number of studies on wide-ranging topics in social sciences. Since its inception, the Institute has completed about 650 applied and policy-related studies on various economic, social, political and administrative issues. The faculty of the Institute has published about 225 books (list enclosed), and over 2,500 technical articles. Of these, over 600 articles were published in refereed journals in India and abroad, 900 articles in various magazines and about 1,000 articles were 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.

An important feature of the studies conducted at the Institute is its inter-disciplinary framework. As already mentioned micro-level analysis of multifaceted aspects of the developmental process in Tumkur district is one of the major contributions that the Institute has made. Another important study using on primary data was on the dynamics of urbanisation in Bangalore City. The data for the study was collected from a survey of the City. Similarly, the Institute is well known for its contributions drawn from village-level sociological studies on caste stratification in society undertaken under the stewardship of Prof. M. N. Srinivas. The ongoing study on rural livelihood systems examines the dynamics of rural transformation. Other areas that have received significant attention are human development, natural resource management, rural transformation and eradication of poverty. Thanks to the foresight of the founding fathers, sustainable development was a priority area right from the inception of the Institute, and ISEC is the earliest institution in the country to have established a separate unit on ecological economics. In recent years, decentralisation and governance has emerged as an important focus area and, thanks to the funding by Ford Foundation, a number of studies have been made on its fiscal, political, administrative and sociological facets. Besides these, a large number of studies have been completed on poverty and rural development and anti-poverty interventions. Various evaluation studies on programmes and policies have provided useful inputs in designing and reforming government policies in education, health design and implementation of anti-poverty policies and social welfare schemes.

ISEC has contributed to the understanding of a number of economic, social and political issues confronting the country and the State. Besides professional publications in books, refereed journals, and conferences and seminars, the ISEC faculty regularly writes in newspapers and periodicals on several policy issues. It has been repeatedly called upon by the governmental agencies, other educational institutions, multilateral and bilateral international aid

agencies, Chambers of Commerce and Industry and NGOs to undertake research and training programmes, conduct seminars and workshops and advise on various analytical and policy related issues. In fact, despite relative decline in core funding by the ICSSR and the State government, ISEC has been able to sustain itself mainly on account of the steady flow of sponsored research projects. Thanks to the high quality of the projects undertaken in the past and the reputation it has earned, the Institute is in a position of having to choose among a large number of projects. This has helped to choose the projects with academic content rather than pure consultancy type projects and has helped the Institute to maintain its strong academic character. Nevertheless, excessive dependence on projects could lead to gradual erosion of academic standards and it is important to ensure a measure of certainty and stability in the funding pattern to minimise the adverse effects of *projectitis*.

One of the important ways in which the Institute has impacted on society is by directly influencing policy formulation and implementation as chairpersons and members of various commissions and committees. Right from the inception of the Institute, both Central and State governments have relied on the expertise of the Institute and appointed the faculty to advise them on various policy matters. The Institute's faculty has provided expert advice to the State government as members of the State Planning Board. The faculty has also served as chairpersons and members of several expert committees on a variety of policy areas such as tax and expenditure reform, devolution to local bodies, agricultural policy and development, urban infrastructure financing, education policy, minimum wages and other labour policy issues. At present, the Director of the Institute, besides being an honorary Economic Adviser to the Government of Karnataka, is also a member of the Tax Reform Commission appointed by the State government.

Another method of impacting on society is to spread education and to train the trainers. Over the years, ISEC has produced 87 doctorates (Annexure 2). The scholars trained in the Institute have secured responsible positions in reputed organisations and have earned recognition and respect for their understanding of social, political and economic dynamics. The doctoral students are selected from all over the country on the basis of a test and interview conducted at the Institute. Admitted students undergo rigorous courses in theory and quantitative techniques. Only those students who qualify in the examination on completion of the course are eligible to register for Ph.D.

The Institute also undertakes regular refresher courses for college and university teachers in economics, sociology, education and development administration. There are also training programmes on various aspects of the economy organised for the government officials. The Institute has also been participating in capacity building and has undertaken to train a large number of elected representatives from different district panchayats. It has also introduced an innovative programme of training private sector officers. The field training for the rural marketing management trainees of Hindustan Lever is organised by the Institute's faculty. The Institute organised a three-day workshop on Research Methodology for International Food Rights Campaign (IFRC) for the members of the IFRC sponsored by the NGO, ActionAid.

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 third 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 about 150 subscriptions within and outside the country. From 2001, it is proposed 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.

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. In the new series, 20 working papers have been brought out in just one year (1999–2000). 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 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. The Indian Society for Ecological Economics requested ISEC to organise the first conference of the Society in December 1999. The conference of the southern chapter of the Indian Association of Social Science Institutions (IASSI) was also held at ISEC at the request of the Association in December last year. Another major activity of the Institute during this year was the organising of the international seminar on “poverty and public policy” which was attended by several renowned economists from India and abroad. This activity was sponsored by several national and international agencies such as ICSSR, NABARD, IDBI, IDFC, IDRC, DFID and SDC. 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.

2. Current Research Activities

2.1 Research Focus:

The manifold research and training activities of the Institute has been detailed in the previous section. In undertaking these activities, there has been a well-maintained balance between pure and applied research in all the social science disciplines researched at ISEC. The research activities of the Institute are organised in terms of different units. At present, there are units in economics, sociology, development administration, population research, education, ecological economics quantitative analysis, agricultural development and rural transformation. The Reserve Bank of India has endowed a unit in macroeconomic policy. Besides these, there is an externally funded programme on decentralisation and governance. The current research focus encompasses most of the contemporary issues of relevance. The list of research projects completed during 1999-2000 and those currently underway are listed in Annexure 4. The unit-wise description of research activities of the Institute is presented in the following.

2.1.1 Core Units of the Institute:

(a) Economics Unit

The major focus of the Unit is on macroeconomic issues of the Indian economy with special emphasis on areas relating to public economics, planning and development, poverty and

public policy and urban infrastructure. The research agenda of the Unit has included issues relating to central, state and local finances, inter and intra-regional disparities in the levels of living, fiscal federalism and inter-governmental fiscal relations and privatisation and public enterprise reform. The studies on urban local finances and issues related to urban infrastructure and housing have also received attention. There has been a particular focus in the studies on domestic trade taxes in India. Studies have also been undertaken on expenditure restructuring at central and state levels. The Unit works closely with the State Government in the design and reform of the State tax system.

The economics unit has been strengthened recently by merging the quantitative analysis and rural economics units with it. With this, the economics unit has the additional responsibility of providing expertise in the application of quantitative analysis in social science research and training. The unit will also have a renewed focus on anti-poverty interventions and rural development issues. The unit will be further strengthened by filling up the vacant positions with young and well-trained economists in the near future.

(b) Ecology-Economics Unit

The fact that ISEC was the first institute to establish a separate ecological economics unit as far back as in 1981 testifies to the vision of its founding fathers. The mandate of the unit is to analyse the interface between economics, ecology and institutions, the trade-off between growth and ecological balance, and to evolve an appropriate strategy for the management of natural resources. With the passage of time and with several ecological issues of development coming to the fore, the Unit has emerged as an important focal point to analyse and identify various policy alternatives relating to sustainable development. The Unit has completed a number of studies covering a wide range of themes such as urban development, economic instruments for pollution abatement, and economic and institutional aspects of management of natural resources such as land, forest, water, and common property resources.

The present focus of research in Ecology Economics Unit includes solid waste management in urban areas and institutional aspects of bio-diversity conservation, household energy use, livestock and environment, irrigation systems and command area development, social forestry, water harvesting, watershed development and dryland agriculture. The institute has special expertise in the management of water resources, analysis of water markets and command area development. The studies on “Ecology, Economics and Institutions of Forest Use in the Western Ghats”, funded by the MacArthur Foundation, presently under way at the Institute, have received wide acclaim from academics and environmental groups alike.

(c) Sociology Unit

The Sociology Unit of the Institute has the distinction of being founded and led for nearly a decade by the doyen of Indian sociology, Prof M N Srinivas. It has distinguished scholars and the strong tradition of research has continued since. The Unit has completed a large number of analytical and insightful sociological studies on wide-ranging issues, the main ones being on rural livelihood systems and sustainable natural resources management, rural poverty, caste in contemporary society, untouchability and social development of backward classes, privatisation of common property resources, entrepreneurship and social mobility, and survival strategies in drought-prone areas. There are two important sociological studies on decentralisation funded by the Ford Foundation. The study on, “Power, Patronage and

Accountability of Panchayats of Karnataka” analyses the political dynamics in decentralisation. “Democratic Decentralisation and Participation of Women” deals with the issue of real empowerment of women in decentralised policy. There has also been a major research initiative on the beneficiary assessment of national sericulture project, under which issues relating to sericulture economy of India have been analysed in detail, giving it an inter-disciplinary focus. Many of these initiatives have, in fact, been taken up at the request of several funding agencies like Swiss Agency for Development and Co-operation (SDC), the Ford Foundation and the World Bank.

(d) Development Administration Unit

The Development Administration Unit was established right at the inception of the Institute. It is credited with having completed a number of studies. This includes publication of 16 books, and over 400 articles in professional journals and newspapers. These studies have ranged from the organisational and administrative aspects of rural development, administrative and political issues related to Indian local self-government and panchayat raj institution, analysis of governance, rent seeking in the government, evaluation of poverty alleviation schemes and anti-poverty strategies, and analysis of elections.

The Unit focuses on four distinct areas. First, political and administrative reforms for good governance in which issues like ethics in Indian governance, institutional strategies for minimising corruption, transparency in administration, and electoral reforms are being analysed. The second area relates to economic reforms and governance, interface between democracy, trade unions and economic restructuring, bureaucratic role in economic reforms, accommodating administrative reforms, role of multilateral agency in development, and issues of decentralised governance. The third area of focus relates to democracy and sustainable development, in which institutional aspects of management of common property resources, role of NGOs and decentralised planning, decentralisation and development issues are being analysed. Under the fourth area, issues relating to development politics, the role of political parties, electoral reforms, and ethics, politics and democracy are being analysed.

(e) Education Unit

Human Resources Development has been one of the priority areas of research in this Institute right from its inception. Hence, Education Unit was set up to provide an analytical underpinning to the analysis of planning, monitoring and management of social, political, economic and cultural changes with special focus on the state of Karnataka. Over the years, considerable work has been done by the Institute on macro-level problems and issues such as literacy, basic education, vocational education, women’s education, and educational planning and management. There have also been studies on the role of education in accelerating growth and development, promoting social mobility, creating a shared basis of economic growth, and social justice, and creating a society with high ethical, social and economic values.

A number of studies on various aspects of education mentioned above have been carried out during the year. The unit has been an important agency undertaking researches for Union Ministry of Human Resource Development as well as several central agencies and institutions such as the Planning Commission, National Council for Educational Research and Training, and National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration. The design and implementation of education sector policy of Government of Karnataka relies heavily on the analysis made by

the education unit of ISEC. Besides central and state government agencies, international agencies like UNESCO, UNICEF and the World Bank have retained the Institute to undertake studies on various aspects of the education sector.

The Education Unit has been undertaking a number of studies in the areas mentioned above. At present it is engaged in a number of studies such as “Evaluation of Capacity Building Programmes for Primary Teachers”, “Functioning of Kendriya Vidyalayas”, “Capacity Development of Village Education Committees”, “Reforming Higher Education Sector”. There are also studies on gender issues relating to higher education.

2.1.2. Externally funded units:

(a) RBI Endowment Unit

Initially named the Social Services Management Unit at the time of its inception, the Unit has, over the years, has concentrated on theoretical and quantitative research in macroeconomics, banking and finance and financial sector analysis, as well as poverty and public policy. The Unit is wholly funded by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), and the faculty enjoys the required autonomy and flexibility in the choice of studies. A number of studies, which are of interest to the RBI, have been completed in the Unit. These include studies on Rural Credit Delivery System, International Financial Markets, Monetary and Fiscal Policy Issues, Institutional Finance, Rural Development, Inflation and Stock Markets, and Economics and Exchange Rate Dynamics. Attempts are on to build a macroeconomic model for simulating alternative fiscal and monetary policy parameters.

(b) Agricultural Development and Rural Transformation (ADRT) Unit

The ADRT Unit was started right from the inception of the Institute. Over the years, it has completed over 100 research projects covering various aspects India’s agrarian economy. These relate to economics of crop production and consumption, pricing and efficiency of resource use, agrarian institutions, agro-climatic regional planning and evaluation of various agricultural programmes. The Ministry of Agriculture, which has funded the Unit, closely monitors its activities. The Ministry also indicates the focus areas and sponsors specific studies from time to time. This is considered as one of the major agro-economic research centres. The unit mainly carries out the research work assigned to it by the Ministry. Nevertheless, it has been found that by and large, these fall within the faculty’s area of interest. In addition to the sponsored work for the Ministry, the unit also undertakes studies for the State governments mainly on the evaluation of various programmes on agricultural development initiated by the State government.

(c) Population Research Centre (Unit).

The Population Research Centre is one of the early units set up in the Institute to (i) conduct and promote research on Population Studies; (ii) assist the State and Union Governments by undertaking analytical studies relating to population trends, demographic transition and health-related issues with policy implications; (iii) provide evaluation of various programmes and schemes launched by the governments at both the central and state levels; and

(iv) conduct training programmes including doctoral programmes on specialised aspects of Population Studies.

The Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare is funding the Unit and the research focus of the Unit has been by and large in the area of family planning programmes. The ministry decides the research agenda of the unit. Under its direction, the unit has been undertaking large-scale surveys to gather primary data and generate information on various aspects of demographic transition. Specific studies dealing with these macro aspects include those on various aspects of reproductive and child health, health delivery system, studies on rates of mortality and morbidity and evaluation studies of family welfare programmes. The Unit also focuses on the fast changing demographic scenario in Karnataka State. With this in view, the Second National Family Health Survey is being carried out. The research focus of the centre also includes studies on the status of women, fertility, regional variations in demographic behaviour, migration and urbanisation and family planning among backward communities.

(d) Sales Tax Chair.

The government of Karnataka has instituted a Chair to make continuous studies on States' sales tax systems. In this, it is proposed to make continuous studies on the structure and operation of sales tax systems, their efficiency and equity implications, simplification and rationalisation of the tax and evolution of a destination based, consumption type, retail stage value added tax in the State. The Commercial Taxes Department of Government of Karnataka meets the expenditure of the Chair.

(e) Research Programme on Decentralised Governance and Planning

With the 73rd and 74th Constitutional amendment on the one hand and economic liberalisation on the other, decentralised governance and planning has assumed centre stage. Not to be left behind, the Institute started a major programme on the study of decentralisation, governance and capacity building, with particular emphasis on the Panchayat Raj institutions. With a view to providing a multi-disciplinary focus, researchers were drawn from Economics, Political Science, Public Administration and Sociology. The Ford Foundation has mainly funded this initiative. Some of the projects in the programme were also supported by the UNDP, Institute of Environmental Studies, Amsterdam, Department of Rural Development and Panchayat Raj, Government of Karnataka, National Institute of Rural Development, Hyderabad, and Ministry of Social Welfare, Government of India.

The Institute has just completed a major study of decentralised planning and governance in the three southern States of Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. Studies have also been done on urban solid waste management in Bangalore, functional and financial devolution to the panchayat raj institutions, concurrent evaluation of grants given to Gram Panchayats, and evaluation of poverty alleviation programmes. The unit has also participated in capacity building of Panchayat Raj institutions in a big way. The unit has been involved in the training of the functionaries of District Panchayats in the first round. The Government of Karnataka has approached the Institute for undertaking further training programmes for the District Panchayat functionaries, and the Institute will be involved in this important activity.

The research programme in the Unit has developed into an inter-disciplinary centre to study administrative, political, fiscal and sociological aspects of decentralisation both in rural

and urban areas. The research focus of the centre is to undertake policy-oriented studies on rural and urban self-government, rural and urban governance, fiscal decentralisation and efficiency in the delivery of rural services like education, health care, implementation of poverty alleviation programmes and provision of basic amenities and solid waste management.

Decentralised governance will be an important institutional requirement for sustainable development in the country and will therefore remain a focus area of research in the Institute during the next decade. Attempts are under way to secure funding to place the unit on a permanent footing. A number of donor agencies including the Ford Foundation and Swiss Agency for Development and Co-operation are being approached for funding research in this area on a sustainable basis.

2.2 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 Prof.V.K.R.V.Rao Chair since 1997. The Board of Governors of the Institute chooses an economist of international eminence for the Chair for every two years. The person chosen for the Chair has to spend at least three months in ISEC during his/her tenure and interact with the faculty and students, give lectures and seminars and undertake research. Under the arrangement the Institute meets the cost of air travel to visit the Institute twice during the tenure and the Professor is paid a monthly honorarium. The Chair is financed by the interest received from the corpus granted by the Ministry of Finance.

Prof. T. N. Srinivasan, Chairman, Department of Economics, Yale University was the first V.K.R.V. Rao Chair Professor, and he was appointed for the term 1997–99. During his tenure Prof. Srinivasan visited the Institute twice, worked closely with the faculty and guided the students. He also gave a series of eight lectures on Indian Economy, which has been brought out as a monograph *Eight Lectures on Indian Economic Reforms* by the Oxford University Press.

For the period 1999–2001, Prof. Kaushik Basu, Carl Marks Professor, Cornell University has been appointed as the V. K. R. V. Rao Chair Professor. Prof. Basu visited ISEC in July-August, 2000. He interacted with faculty and students of ISEC, took seminars and gave public lectures on issues pertaining to WTO and child labour. He will be visiting ISEC again in July, 2001.

2.3 Ph. D. Programme:

One of the important objectives of the Institute is to undertake regular training of doctoral students. The Institute is affiliated to Bangalore University, University of Mysore, Karnatak University and the National Law School of India University. Over the years, 87 students have secured doctoral degrees from ISEC in various social science disciplines (Annexure 2). ISEC students have been absorbed in a number of institutions throughout the country and have performed extremely well to bring credit to the Institute. The unique feature of the doctoral programme in ISEC is its interdisciplinary focus. Presently, there are 46 students in different stages of their Ph.D. in various disciplines of social sciences (Annexure 3).

The Ph.D. programme in ISEC is rigorous. The students are selected from all over the country on the basis of tests and interviews. 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 is 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 to teach in the course. The teaching in economics is done in close collaboration with Indian Statistical Institute (ISI), Bangalore. The invited professors during 2000 include Prof. K. L. Krishna of Delhi School of Economics, Delhi, Prof. Arindam Das-Gupta, Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, Pune and Prof. N. S. S. Narayana and Surekha Rao of ISI and Prof. T. Krishna Kumar.

2.4 *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. The past invitees include Justice. M. N. Venkatachalaiah, former Chief Justice of India, Prof. U. R. Rao, former Chairman, Space Commission, Mr. T. R. Satishchandran, former Governor of Goa, Prof. U. R. Ananthamurthy, eminent writer, and M. Y. Ghorpade, a freedom fighter and statesman. The Rajyotsava lecture for 2000 was delivered by Mr. N. R. Narayana Murthy, Chairman and CEO, Infosys on , “Have Economic Principles Mattered in Economic Policy Making: A Layman’s Views.”

2.5 *Training and Workshops*

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 and education. Under the World Bank-aided capacity building programme on ecological economics, the Institute is one of the recognised centres for imparting training to both teachers and government officials. The Institute also undertakes refresher course in quantitative techniques and computer applications for teachers and researchers in social sciences. There are also training programmes organised at the request of the State government for government officials on various contemporary issues such as the Value Added Tax (VAT), the property tax, WTO and India. Recently, an International Programme on Research Methodology to train the functionaries of the NGO was conducted at the request of ActionAid.

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. Another such 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.

In addition to the above, the Institute has been organising several seminars and workshops on a variety of themes in social sciences to disseminate the findings of research undertaken in the Institute. Most of the themes have contemporary relevance and are useful to academicians and policy makers alike. During the last one year alone, the Institute collaborated with the World Bank Institute to organise a workshop on “Decentralisation and Making of Sub-national Policy. The workshop was attended by a number of academics and policy makers from India and abroad. Another important event was the international seminar on Poverty and Public Policy. The seminar was attended by a number of experts from India and abroad. The Institute also organised the first conference of the Indian Society for Ecological Economics from December 20–22, 1999. There have also been several workshops and seminars on issues of contemporary relevance such as cost and wastage in primary education, 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.

3. Vision for the Future: ISEC 2010

3.1 Current Status of ISEC

Transforming an organisation into an institution relevant to the needs of society requires creating a congenial climate for promoting research and training. To achieve this, it is necessary to adopt systems and practices that promote accountability and provide incentives to improve performance. In order to set the reform agenda, it is necessary to understand where ISEC stands today and identify the areas requiring improvements. This can be done by comparing the status of the Institute with the common systems and practices prevailing in High Performing Knowledge Institutions (HPKI)¹. Such a comparison helps to assess the strengths and weaknesses, set goals and identify the constraints in achieving them.

The status of ISEC today has to be evaluated against the benchmarking provided by the operating practices in HPKI. The important parameters for comparison are (i) faculty selection and development; (ii) portfolio of products and services; (iii) organisational structure and design; (iv) infrastructure and support services; and (v) funding position. In the following, the status of ISEC is analysed in terms of each of these parameters.

3.1.1 Faculty selection and development.

ISEC has its own recruitment rules, which are followed strictly in selecting faculty and staff. These rules were framed at the inception of the Institute. Although recruitment is supposed to be generally done through open advertisements and competition, over the years some rigidities have crept in. First, until recently, both Ph. D. and Master’s degrees were stipulated as essential qualifications for the recruitment of faculty. This has been amended to enhance competitive selection so that persons with Masters degree in other subjects but having

¹ A comprehensive and insightful analysis of HPKI is available in Tushar Shah, *Launching Knowledge Institutions of Excellence: Learning from 50 years of Indian Experiences in Institution Building*. Policy School Working Paper

Ph. D. in the relevant subject can also be considered. The amendment, besides fostering greater competition, will enhance the multi-disciplinary approach.

While in general, selection is based on open search, merit and suitability, the Research Analysts and Technical Assistants, on obtaining Ph. D. were considered for promotion based on an external review. Consequently, most of the Assistant Professors' posts are currently filled through these promotions rather than open search, merit and suitability. However, as a condition for the implementation of new pay scales imposed by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, this has been withdrawn and all future recruitment will be purely merit based and will be done through open search and selection.

Competence development of the faculty depends on the opportunity to interact with peers in the profession and exposure to professional institutions. While most of the senior faculty members in the Institute could avail of international fellowships of various kinds in the past, the younger members do not have the opportunity. It is necessary to explore funding availability for providing international fellowships at Post-doctoral levels to enable capacity development of younger faculty members. It is also important to have understanding with institutions of excellence to have faculty exchange programmes. Inviting eminent scholars to visit the Institute and arranging series of lectures by them also will provide greater opportunities to the faculty and students to interact with them and help in capacity development.

The reward structure and growth avenues do depend on competence and performance. However, like in other social science research institutions the structure of rewards is not strictly incentive based. Increments are given routinely and there is no way to reward better performing persons with greater financial rewards. Annual review of the faculty provides an opportunity to assess their performance, but this has to be linked to incentives to ensure accountability. It is proposed to evolve proper norms for review and to eventually link rewards with performances. The recently enacted rules to allow faculty members to undertake consultancy are aimed at helping the better performing faculty to avail of opportunities provided in the market. Also, recruitment to the proposed new centres of excellence will have to be incentive based.

3.1.2 Portfolio of products and services:

It is difficult to identify the core products in a social science research institute. Ensuring high quality research, providing policy inputs and educating the public on issues pertaining to political, social and economic transformation and imparting education and training are the core outputs of ISEC. In each of these areas, significant improvements are necessary.

In research, first, it is necessary to bring a proper mix of sponsored and independent research. This would require a measure of financial independence. Within independent research, there has to be an optimal mix of pure and applied research. To achieve this, it is important to induct competent young researchers with exposure to the frontiers of knowledge in their respective areas.

The ICSSR review of the Institute has commented that the research programme of the Institute is overwhelmingly concentrated on applied issues, with very little theoretical research currently being undertaken. This has to be rectified. It is also necessary to increase both the quality of publications and their numbers. A number of measures have been recently initiated to improve the research quality and these will yield rewards in the medium term. Some of the

measures taken so far include the requirement to give seminars before finalising the methodology and before completing the project, peer review of the project report by two referees and copy-editing the report before they are brought out or submitted to the sponsor.

ISEC is a premier institution contributing to policy making at the State and local levels. It has been working closely with the state government and yet has been successful in maintaining a respectable distance to ensure objectivity and autonomy. The Director and the faculty have served in many policy reform committees and commissions as Chairpersons and Members. The faculty interacts closely with the bureaucracy by providing inputs on the latest knowledge and information on contemporary issues relevant to policy (such as WTO or VAT). Periodic lecture series by eminent personalities on a variety of subjects and contribution of the faculty members popular articles in newspapers and magazines on many contemporary policy themes have helped to improve public awareness on many social, economic and governance-related issues. The profile of the Institute has been gradually changing from being regional to being national. However, much more needs to be done to project the national profile of the Institute. These include improving research and publications on national rather than regional themes and holding national workshops and conferences and interacting with other national-level institutions in various ways.

The Ph. D. teaching programme of the Institute has been one of the strongest in social sciences in the country. Quality is ensured through purely merit-based selection, inviting eminent faculty to teach in the programme, inviting international scholars for reasonably long duration to interact with the students. Recently, a number of measures have been taken to strengthen it further. These include revision of syllabi to incorporate latest developments in the respective subjects, appointment of a Ph. D. co-ordinator to look at academic and non-academic problems of the students, organising bi-annual seminars to report and discuss the progress of their study and creation of Ph. D. committee to supervise the students rather than assigning a student to an individual guide to ensure a measure of interdisciplinarity.

At present, ISEC organises a number of training programmes, workshops and seminars as and when requested by a sponsoring agency. University Grants Commission has recognised ISEC as a centre for conducting refresher programmes for university and college teachers in Economics, Education and Sociology. There are also training programmes on the application of quantitative methods and computers in social sciences for the Indian Council of Social Science Research. Besides these, a number of training programmes are held for the elected representatives of district panchayats. At the request of the state government, the Institute also organises training programmes on issues relating to various policy and administrative matters from time to time. ISEC also undertakes a capacity building training programme for government officials on environmental economics funded by the World Bank. It has also been planned to undertake an educational training programme for the rural population on health and family planning related issues using satellite technology. While there are a number of training programmes covering a various target groups, it is important to make them systematic with a calendar of programmes brought out at the beginning of the year. This will help in better planning and programming of the short-term training programmes.

3.1.3 Organisational design

As already mentioned, while the Director of the Institute is the chief executive, the policy decisions are made by the Board of Governors. The decision making is done in a participatory manner with a number of statutory committees assisting the Director in all major

decision making. Most academic matters are decided in the academic committee. The research programmes committee monitors the progress of projects. The joint consultative committee considers all decisions relating to administrative matters. The library committee assists in policy decisions on the library. The computer committee considers matters concerning computerisation.

The participatory nature of the decision making facilitates smooth functioning and provides the necessary checks and balances in the system. However, it is necessary to steer the working of the committees on the right lines to ensure the best results from the consultative process. Unless measures are taken to streamline and activate them, they may work in a routine manner and often, can concentrate energies to resist change.

At present the research programme of the Institute is organised in terms of eight different units. This has, rather than promoting interdisciplinary research on many a crosscutting area, promoted compartmentalised system defeating the very objective of multi-disciplinary approach. This type of organisational structure promotes bureaucratic system, and results in significant waste of a material and human resources. The matrix type organisation needed to promote research culture is difficult with the multi-pyramidal structure.

Some attempts have already been made to consolidate some of the units by merging Quantitative Analysis and Economics units. Much more effort is needed to achieve a more rational organisation, which has to be calibrated in the next three years. The new focus areas where ISEC should achieve excellence will have to be organised in the matrix type with persons drawn from different disciplines to analyse the crosscutting issues.

3.1.4 Infrastructure and support services

The infrastructure and support services need substantial refurbishment and upgradation as has already been detailed in the earlier section. All the buildings are three decades old and are in need of substantial repairs and maintenance. Some repairs to the main academic-cum-administrative complex, student hostel and the guesthouse is already under way. This is financed by the special assistance of Rs. 50 lakhs received from the Planning Commission. All the toilets in the main building, students' hostel and library are being rebuilt. Recently, a standby generator has been set up to ensure uninterrupted power supply. However, much more remains to be done to refurbish the building and the auditorium as these have suffered significant deterioration owing to neglect of maintenance over the years. Most importantly, library upgradation and computerisation, securing adequate computer hardware and software particularly for the students' computer centre, refurbishing seminar rooms and logistic support, improving connectivity, providing a good communication system to the faculty and staff are tasks that should be taken up on a priority basis.

3.1.5 Funding and resource generation

The total budget of ISEC is close to Rs. 5 crore. Of this about 10 per cent is received from the ICSSR and an additional 28 per cent is received from the Government of Karnataka. The Union Ministries of Agriculture, Health and Family Welfare, Reserve Bank of India and the Commercial Tax Department of the Karnataka Government together contribute about 25 per cent of funding for the units instituted by them. The rest of the funding (37 per cent) accrues

from project fees. Over the last five years the dependence of the Institute on projects for funding has shown a steady increase from 26 per cent to 37 per cent.

The problem is not just the inadequacy of funding. There are large fluctuations and uncertainty in the finance available to the Institute. This is partly because there is only Rs. one crore corpus fund in the Institute contributed by the Union Ministry of Finance. During the last one year, due to persistent efforts, the Institute has been able to generate an additional corpus of two crores of rupees. To ensure adequacy, certainty, flexibility and autonomy, it is necessary to have a corpus fund of about Rs. 7 crores by 2004-05. Thus, in the next three years an additional Rs. 4 crores will have to be generated. Persistent efforts will be made to achieve this. The Sir Ratan Tata Trust has been approached for providing corpus support. Besides these, the Institute has approached the Ford Foundation to provide corpus support of USD. 500,000 for creating a centre in Decentralisation and Governance. A separate centre on natural resources management is expected to start with the assistance from the Ford Foundation. The Infosys Foundation has also been approached to start a centre on Social Sector Policy and Human Development.

3.1.6 Measures taken so far to improve research and training

During the last two years, a number of measures have been initiated to improve the quality of research and training, streamline administration and improve infrastructure facilities. Measures initiated to improve the quality of research and training include: (i) revival of refereed and copy-edited working paper series and reorganisation of the journal; (ii) requirement to give seminars before finalising the methodology for the studies and before completing the study; (iii) introduction of a system of refereeing the completed studies; (iv) organising workshops and conferences on important themes; (v) inviting eminent social scientists as visiting faculty; (vi) restructuring the pre-Ph. D. programme and revision of syllabi; (vii) streamlining the student seminars to monitor the progress of Ph. D. students and to provide a multi-disciplinary approach; (viii) creation of a data bank to systematically store primary and secondary data in social sciences; and (ix) introduction of annual performance review.

The administrative measures to improve the organisational set-up, enhance efficiency and improve governance include: (i) introduction of changes in recruitment rules; (ii) freezing administrative appointments; (iii) appointing a specialised administrator as a registrar; (iv) consolidation and restructuring some units; (v) privatisation of some facilities; (vi) enacting rules to regulate the faculty consultancy.

A number of measures have also been taken to improve the infrastructure facilities in the Institute. These include (i) refurbishment of the guest house, students' hostel and academic complex; (ii) setting up of a local area network (LAN) and providing e-mail and internet facilities to all faculty and students; (iii) augmenting the availability of computers and (iv) providing a standby generator to ensure uninterrupted power supply to administrative and seminar blocks.

3.2 *Envisioning Excellence for ISEC: Strategies and Actions:*

On many considerations ISEC passes the test of a high-performing institution. Yet, after twenty-eight years, the time is opportune for a thorough review of the potential, promise and performances. More importantly, with changes in surrounding environment, it is necessary to reset the goals and strategies. The measures taken so far provide a useful base on which future plan for achieving excellence should be worked out. This implies strengthening the research

agenda, redefining the focus areas and reengineering the institution to provide an accommodating environment and capacity to achieve the goals. This involves restructuring of administration to provide simple, efficient, transparent and yet accountable and accommodating system. On the academic side, this will call for significant augmentation of research capability by inducting competent researchers and by providing opportunities for significant upgradation in the knowledge base of the faculty. It is also necessary to restructure incentives to improve productivity and performance.

In any social science research institution, it is difficult to set quantifiable goals against which performance can be judged. Nevertheless, it is necessary to define goals, even if it were in qualitative terms. In the case of ISEC, it is envisioned to transform the institution into an institution of excellence with its quality of research, training and policy advice comparable to any best international institution.

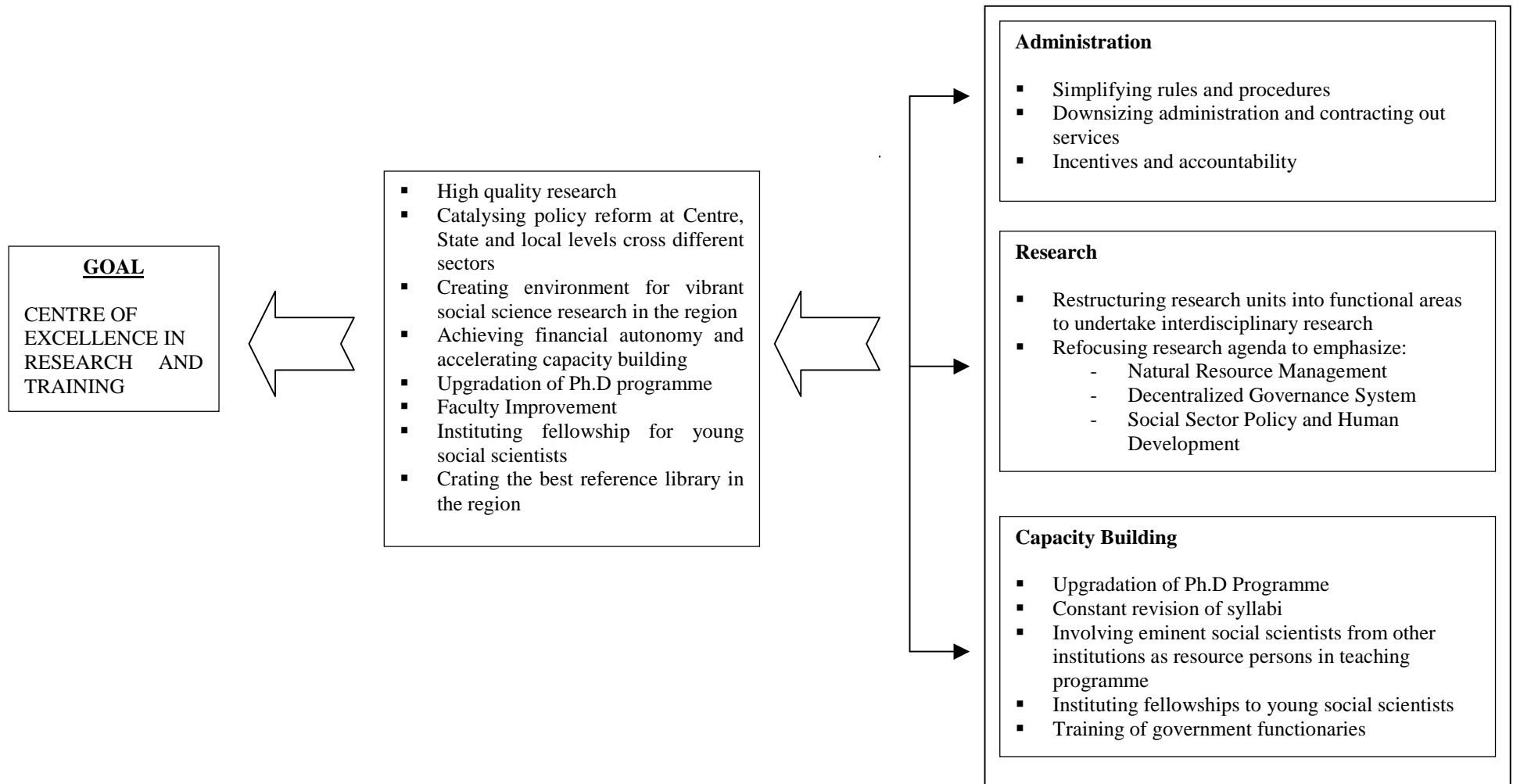
In terms of potential outputs, realising the vision of achieving excellence implies:

- High quality research output
- Catalysing social and economic transformation of the country through its research and policy advice for central, state and local governments functioning in different sectors of the economy.
- Imparting high level training to policy makers as well as other stakeholders in social science research and teaching.
- Creating an enabling environment for vibrant social science research.
- Achieving a measure of financial autonomy.
- Accelerating capacity building in social science research.
- Ensuring efficient governance.

Achieving the above objectives calls for systemic improvements in administrative and research organisation. To achieve this, it is necessary to have continuous programme of capacity building. The future of the institution is closely related to the opportunities provided to the faculty to constantly upgrade its knowledge base. The envisioned goal, the potential output to realise the goal and the means to achieve it are shown in the accompanying chart.

A number of measures are required to transform ISEC into an institution of excellence in the course of the next 10 years. These will have to be carefully designed and calibrated. Many of the measures needed to improve the quality of research, advocacy and training do not require additional finances, but a strong will and sustained effort. These measures include: (i) refocusing research agenda in thrust areas; (ii) reorganisation of units to promote interdisciplinary research; (iii) simplification of rules and procedures, promotion of matrix type organisational design and encouraging participatory decision making; (iv) streamlining administration and computerisation of accounts administration; (v) systematising the regular training programmes into a core product of the Institute; (vi) promoting greater interaction with other social science research institutions; and (vii) creating an environment of incentives and accountability through performance based career development.

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While the measures mentioned above do not require any additional funding, creating an accommodating environment, improvement in infrastructure and achieving development of human resources can be achieved only with significant investments. The specific measures involving significant investments needed to achieve excellence in research include: (i) creation of multidisciplinary centres of research in emerging thrust areas; (ii) library redevelopment, computerisation and improvement in connectivity; (iii) visiting fellowships for faculty development; (iv) inviting eminent visiting scholars from within and outside the country; (v) augmenting the availability of computers particularly in the student computer centre; (vi) repair and refurbishment of research and administrative complex, auditorium, hostels and the guesthouse. Above all, it is necessary that the institution should achieve a measure of financial independence. Some of the critical areas needed to achieve excellence merit more detailed discussion.

3.3. Key areas of research and training.

3.3.1 Refocusing Research Areas.

In terms of academic agenda, ISEC will strive for excellence in research and training in a variety of areas in social sciences with an inter-disciplinary frame. While continuing micro-level analysis to gain a better understanding of social and economic transformation, the research agenda will also focus on macro-economic analysis of Indian economy with particular reference to macro-economic stability and investment through fiscal consolidation and financial sector reform. There will also be emphasis on issues relating to trade liberalisation and the implication of WTO on various sectors. The economic analysis will also focus on domestic and foreign investment issues. Similarly, sociological issues on both traditional concerns such as family and kinship, urban sociology, tribal and dalit studies and cultural change will continue to receive attention. In addition, sociological issues relating to decentralisation, caste stratification and gender related studies would also be analysed. The Institute will also continue its studies on education, development and administration areas. It will also help to improve the quality of policy making at sub-national levels, and improve the standard of teaching and research through its doctoral programme and short-term training and refresher courses. The Institute will continue to focus its studies on:

- Design and reform of macroeconomic and foreign trade policies in India
- Sub-national economic policies
- Central, State and Local finances, and inter-governmental fiscal relations
- Agricultural development and rural transformation
- Poverty and public policy, rural livelihood systems, social and economic transformation of the village economy, social and economic upliftment of the disadvantaged.
- Regional disparities and development
- Issues relating to caste stratification, and human development of socially disadvantaged sections of society.

- Problems of industrialisation in the State, agriculture-industry linkages and development
- Issues of good governance, administrative reforms and ethics of public life,
- Women and development, gender discrimination,
- Development policies and electoral reforms
- Administrative, political and sociological aspects of decentralisation
- Issues and problems of educational inequity, costs and wastage in primary education, marketing education, decentralisation of educational management; privatisation of higher education, gender issues, spatial and class imbalances cut across all such concerns
- Consequences of changing family structure on gender issues, old age and health
- Ecological concerns in economic and social analysis of developmental studies, sustainable use of natural resources, and institutional aspects of natural resources management

The issues relating to social and economic change as well as those affecting governance and civil society will continue to receive attention. Some of the emerging areas too will receive focussed attention. The three important emerging areas of research in the country that will receive particular emphasis will be:

- (i) Decentralised governance;
- (ii) Management of natural resources; and
- (iii) Human development and social sector policies.

All the three are inter-disciplinary areas involving economists, sociologists and political scientists. The Institute has comparative advantage in dealing with these issues and hence shall make significant contribution in each of these areas in coming years. With the market-based liberalisation and the thrust given to decentralisation after the 73rd and 74th amendments to the Constitution, one of the major areas of research in the future will have to be political, administrative, fiscal and sociological aspects of decentralisation and governance. In particular, we need to analyse the issues of governance, capacity building and ability to raise resources at the village panchayat level. Issues such as efficient service delivery, linking revenue expenditure decisions, participatory development, access to services to and empowerment of disadvantaged groups, design and implementation of anti-poverty policies at the village level and participation of socially disadvantaged groups and women in decentralised decision making will form some of the important areas of focus. ISEC will also develop a reliable data bank on village-level decentralisation by collecting information from both secondary sources and through sample surveys. Parallel analysis and information system will also be undertaken to analyse urban decentralisation issues.

The second important emerging area is human development. Human development is not only a means to achieve material prosperity and eradication of poverty, but also an end in itself. Given that the state governments play an overwhelming role in social sector policies, work on human development is extremely important from the point of view of providing policy inputs for sub-national policy making. Endowment of human capital is necessary to create a shared basis of economic growth, a component of any growth-mediated poverty alleviation strategy, hasten demographic transition, enhance the empowerment of disadvantaged groups and

to target anti-poverty interventions. Human development is the most important factor in social and economic transformation. Emphasis on human development entails shifting the research focus to the analysis of education and health sector policies. Analysis of human development issues will be one of the most important research areas in the country in the next few decades and one of the thrust areas in ISEC in the coming years.

The third area of research, which will receive additional focus, will be the management of natural resources for sustainable development. With increasing population, urbanisation and industrialisation, pressure on land, water and air is likely to intensify and with this, the problem of managing natural resources will take a centre stage. Natural resource management also requires an inter-disciplinary focus with close interaction not only among different branches of social sciences but also between physical and social sciences. Issues such as the management of forestry, bio-diversity, irrigation systems and command area development, development of water markets, water harvesting and watershed development, pollution control and solid waste management will require focussed attention in the coming years. Since ISEC already has a strong ecological economics unit and has done considerable work in many of these areas, expanding the scope of research to include multifaceted aspects of natural resources management should be but a natural outcome. In dealing with the management of natural resources as a focus area for the future, ISEC will collaborate closely with the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, and other scientific institutions in the city.

3.3.2 Strategy to cope with new challenges: faculty improvement

A critical element of improving research capacity is faculty improvement. The Institute's future is closely linked to the ability and competence of the faculty. The cutting edge of expertise in any subject will depend on the opportunity and environment for the faculty to constantly upgrade the knowledge base. Therefore, it is necessary to provide both formal and informal means of improving their expertise. Opportunities to acquire additional expertise are particularly important for younger members of the faculty. It is therefore proposed to create a separate fund, which will be used to send younger members of faculty to important universities abroad for further training. It is proposed to approach various agencies to obtain the necessary funds for training the faculty.

One of the methods of enhancing research capability is to improve the quality of interactions. Visits of the faculty to other institutions and hosting academic visitors from other institutions based on specific work plans for collaboration will go a long way in cross-fertilisation and will improve research productivity. Therefore, it is intended to start an exchange visitors' programme with other institutions.

3.3.3. Restructuring the doctoral programme:

In addition to enhancing the research capacity of the Institute and expanding the research base in the thrust areas, significant effort will be made to strengthen the Ph.D programme. The pre-Ph.D. syllabi are being constantly upgraded to familiarise the students with the latest research in the respective subjects. Involving the guest faculty in the teaching programme provides the students with opportunities to interact with them. It is also proposed to start inter-institutional exchange of research scholars to enable greater interactions with other academic institutions in the region and to reap the economies of scale and scope.

Right from the selection of students until they complete the Ph.D. programme, emphasis will be placed on achieving a high degree of understanding and acquisition of skills to ensure ability to undertake independent research. The students are required to give seminars every semester reporting the progress made by them and detailing the scope, approach and methodology adopted in the study to enable close scrutiny by the faculty. In addition, with this the methods of monitoring their progress have been strengthened.

3.3.4 Research and policy feed back.

Policy relevance is an important yardstick for the success of a research programme from the viewpoint of donors. This is particularly true if the donor is a governmental agency. Besides, the visibility of the institution depends upon the influence it brings to bear on the policy design and implementation. However, to be relevant, the policy-related research will have to take cognisance of ground realities and constraints. This would require constant interaction of researchers with policy makers, programme implementers and the NGOs. The Institute will strive to improve its interaction with the governmental and non-governmental agencies.

An important way to promote interaction of research scholars with policy makers and the NGOs is to organise brainstorming sessions, seminars and conferences from time to time on themes of contemporary policy relevance. This will foster better interaction of the Institute with policy makers and help them to design and implement relevant policies in much more informed manner. ISEC will take initiatives to organise these activities in all areas of social sciences. ISEC will also bring out the Developmental Perspectives of the State from time to time, which will act as an important reference material and help to build policy frame. The Development Perspectives will bring out major challenges and propose correctives in different sectors of the economy of the State every two years beginning 2001.

One of the most effective ways of improving the quality of decision making is to impart training programme on various social and economic issues including policy matters to the policy makers. ISEC will also serve as a nodal point for imparting advanced training on economic policy issues to middle and senior level administrators on various reform themes of contemporary relevance. These include WTO and its implications on different sectors of the economy, designing and implementing Value Added Tax, alternative techniques of budgetary projections, expenditure control and management, poverty and human development issues, agricultural growth and development, electoral reforms, decentralisation and good governance.

3.3.5 Training Programmes

ISEC should play a key role in skill upgradation and capacity development in the State. Besides constantly upgrading the Ph.D programme imparted at the Institute, ISEC will shoulder the responsibility of improving the knowledge base of teachers in the colleges and universities in the region. The Institute intends to conduct a number of refresher and training programmes to upgrade the knowledge base of the teachers in Economics, Sociology, Demography, Education, and Development Administration. In undertaking this task, teachers and researchers will be provided with better knowledge of Quantitative Methods in social sciences. ISEC will also provide opportunities for the university and college teachers to work

in the Institute to use their sabbatical productively. The possibility of funding this programme will be explored.

In order to achieve constant improvement in the knowledge base and make impact on the economy through policy inputs and training programmes, it is necessary to closely interact with academic institutions in the region, central and state government agencies, representatives of industry and trade and NGOs. Networking with other academic institutions in the region would help to foster collaboration, enhance gains by exchanging results of research, avoid repetitiveness and ensure cost effectiveness by reaping scale economies. Interaction with the bureaucracy is essential not only to understand the intricacies and difficulties of implementing policies but also to help the administrators with more informed policy inputs.

A critical area where the Institute will have to take a proactive role is in trying to evolve a close alliance and collaboration with the private sector and the NGOs. As the private sector takes increasingly active role in economic activity of the country, research and training will have to be designed to be useful to the private sector as well. The Institute has already taken a lead in having prominent private sector representation in the Board of Governors. However, with the passage of time, it is necessary to have greater collaboration with the private sector in order to evolve the research agenda. This is also necessary to avail greater private sector support in financing the Institute in the coming years, as Government support is not likely to keep pace with the increasing requirements.

Equally important is the need to closely interact with important NGOs who have been doing excellent work in a variety of activities relating to anti poverty interventions and rural development, reduction of illiteracy, capacity development, decentralisation, governance and sustainable development. ISEC intends to work in close collaboration with important NGOs particularly in capacity building in the State.

3.4 Reengineering the Organisation

3.4.1 Good Governance.

Re-engineering is a critical element to ensure the preparedness of the Institution to meet the emerging challenges. Over a period of time, all institutions tend to acquire certain degree of administrative inflexibility and bureaucratic approach and often, become handmaids of some group dynamics or the other. Such tendencies reduce their effectiveness and responsiveness to deal with changing requirements. It is therefore necessary to re-engineer the organisation to make it purposive, less bureaucratic and responsive in both academic and administrative spheres. Such a reform is necessary also to adjust to changes in technology.

The most important aspect of re-engineering in an academic institution is to ensure accountability and incentives, promote informal environment, minimise administrative overheads and reduce the layers of bureaucracy. This task of improving governance in administration is to re-structure and professionalise the administration. This calls for creating a responsive bureaucracy with clearly defined lines of authority, assignment of specific responsibility to each individual administrative agent and imparting the necessary skills to undertake these responsibilities. Rules and procedures will have to be simplified and individual employees of the Institute should be made accountable to the tasks assigned to them. Specific assignment of tasks helps to fix responsibility and the entire system will have to be done in a transparent manner to avoid subjectivity and bias. In short, it is necessary to

professionalise the administration and make it sensitive and responsive to changing requirements.

Another aspect of administrative reorganisation is simplification of rules and procedures. Rules that have been framed about three decades ago, although have served a useful purpose, are bound to pose impediments and impart inflexibility, and that has indeed been the case in ISEC. These rules and procedures need to be considerably simplified, be they on recruitment, vertical and horizontal mobility of academic and administrative personnel or day-to-day management of the Institute. In undertaking simplification, it is necessary to take account of the changes in technology as well as the requirements. Action has already been initiated to examine the rules and procedures of the Institute afresh and it is hoped that within a year, it should be possible to work out a plan of action to simplify rules and procedures.

3.4.2 Restructuring academic units:

The most important aspect of improving academic governance in ISEC is to foster inter disciplinary research in a more meaningful manner. Over the years creation of Units on subject lines has only helped to minimise interaction between different areas and instead of fostering inter-disciplinary research, each Unit has tried to work within its own frame and with minimal interaction with other units. This, in fact, has constrained the achievement of the potential in terms of fostering inter-disciplinary focus in research. It is therefore necessary to re-group various units from subject areas into themes. A step in this direction has already been initiated by having programmes on decentralisation and governance, natural resources management and social sector policy and human development. Another important area that will take a centre-stage in the coming years is the impact of information technology revolution and the spread of knowledge-based industries in the region on social and economic inequalities and the well being of the community at large.

3.4.3 Performance appraisal and rewards:

The structure of incentives is critical to the development of any institution. Over the years, the administrative and legal constraints have adversely impacted on the structure of incentives in all Institutions and ISEC is no exception. This has led to serious moral hazard problems and frustration and a feeling of futility among the performers. It is necessary to move over to a system with appropriate structure of incentives and accountability where rewards are linked to performance levels. With the enactment of consultancy rules, the performing faculty has been given an opportunity to improve their earnings. However, it is important to ensure that consultancy does not compete with the Institute, and the consultancy is not done at considerable cost to Institute's own work.

3.5 *Capacity building.*

Human resource development calls for significant efforts at enhancing productivity and ensuring a secure future for the Institute. It is essential that programme should be evolved to constantly upgrade the research capacity of both faculty and the research staff of ISEC. Unfortunately, at present, no specific schemes are available through which the faculty and staff are given the opportunity to upgrade their knowledge base and catch up with recent developments in their area of specialisation. Specific schemes to enable the faculty to catch up with the latest developments in respective fields will have to be initiated.

The Institute proposes to set up a programme and keep apart funds for training young members of faculty in important universities and educational institutions abroad for one academic year in a phased manner. On an average, providing one fellowship would cost about \$ 15000 and it is proposed to collect funds to train about 10 young members of faculty over the next 5-7 years. This would require setting apart about \$150,000. The Institute will explore the possibility of mobilising resources for the purpose with different funding agencies. In addition, it may be necessary to provide short term visiting fellowships to middle level and senior members of faculty to achieve significant improvements in productivity and quality of research work in the Institute.

3.6 Upgradation of Infrastructure facilities.

An important pre-requisite for improving productivity is upgradation of quality infrastructure. In spite of the improvements achieved in recent years, significant efforts will be needed to augment the quality of infrastructure to meet the requirements. The Institute has taken up an ambitious programme to upgrade library facilities and improve its user friendliness. Towards this end, a programme of computerising the library has already been taken up. This would require re-classification of all the books and periodicals and obtaining the necessary hardware and software. It is also necessary to improve the facilities in the seminar rooms and auditorium.

Another important area that requires significant strengthening is the computer network and communication facilities. Many of the computers presently in use are old and obsolete and they need to be phased out. Substantial number of new computers will have to be procured for faculty, library, administration and students. It is also necessary to lease in a dedicated communication line for e-mail and Internet facilities.

ISEC has taken the initiative of establishing a Data Bank. Progress has been made to gather data on social, economic and political variables in the country and the State and classify them in a user-friendly manner. Each unit has been asked to prepare the data already collected by them in a user-friendly manner for storing in the data bank. They have also been asked to prepare a list of data to be collected and plan its collection and classification. All these will be put on the network and the entire work will be taken up in a time bound manner. However, this is only a beginning and significant work needs to be done in ensuring adequate information in the data bank to make it useful for the researchers. It would take about three years before a complete Data Bank is established.

The main buildings of the Institute as well as its library, seminar and hostel wings have been established 28 years ago. Over the years, due to various reasons, maintenance of these buildings has suffered. A part of the guesthouse has already been refurbished, thanks to the assistance from the Planning Commission. However, refurbishing another wing in the guesthouse and students' hostel need substantial investment. The main buildings of the Institute too require significant upgradation. The seminar halls and auditorium are also in need of urgent repair. All these need to be taken up urgently. Substantial resources need to be augmented to make the infrastructure productive and useful.

3.7 Financial Management.

At the time of inception of ISEC, there was a clear understanding that both the State Government and the ICSSR will share the core expenditures of the Institute equally. Over the

years however, both the agencies have found it difficult to meet the increasing needs of the Institute, and consequently the Institute has had to approach other funding agencies to establish separate Units for doing specialised studies for them. In fact, with the passage of time, the share of ICSSR steadily declined to constitute about 10 per cent of the total budget of the Institute. Similarly, the State Government's contribution works out to only about 28 per cent of the total budget. As already mentioned, these have had adverse repercussions on the Institute's research programme.

As already mentioned, one of the adverse effects of resource constraint has been to stop fresh recruitment. At present, two posts of Professors, nine posts of Associate Professors and ten posts Assistant Professors are vacant and the existing resource position does not permit filling of these vacancies. Another unfortunate fallout of non-availability of resources has been the reduced fund allocation to the Library. Despite best efforts to earmark funds from various projects to the Library, computers and equipment, paucity of funds in the core budget of the Institute has had its adverse effect on this vital infrastructure.

An important prerequisite for achieving high level of performance in the Institute is to have a measure of financial independence. Flexibility and autonomy are extremely important in order to plan the activities towards achieving excellence in research and training. Broadly, some degree of flexibility and autonomy can be had if there are independent sources of revenue to finance at least 30 per cent of the core activities of the Institute.

Achieving self-sufficiency of this order, however, would require substantial augmentation of the corpus fund. With the revision of pay scales, the core expenditure of the Institute has gone up to Rs. 1.8 crores and assuming an expenditure escalation at 10 per cent every year, for 30 per cent self-sufficiency would require the Institute to generate Rs. 85 lakhs in 2004-2005. This at 12 per cent return, would require the Institute to create a corpus of at least Rs. 7 crores. This implies that every year the Institute will have to add about Rs. 1.3 crores to the Corpus in the next three years. This indeed is a tall order.

Keeping this objective in view, a strategy is being formulated to augment the corpus fund. Besides approaching various governmental agencies, the Institute is making all out effort at reaching the private sector to mobilise resources. There has been some positive indication of getting establishing a programme support from the Ford Foundation for 'Decentralisation and Governance'. Ford Foundation has been approached to provide a planning grant to initiate programme of study on 'Natural Resources Management'. Attempts are also being made to approach Infosys Foundation to finance Chairs in 'Social Sector Policies' and 'Decentralisation and Governance'. Through these efforts, it is targeted to generate an additional corpus fund of Rs. 3 crores.

3.8 *Developing research perspective and strategy in individual units*

In the ultimate analysis, the Institution will be known by its impact on the society through its research, training and contribution to policy making. This would require that each of the Units should formulate a research perspective and work with discipline and dedication. The faculty and staff of the Institute should have a sense of belonging and pride. While re-engineering the organisation and re-stating the incentive structure would go a long way in developing a sense of belonging, it is through the quality of infrastructure and work culture

and environment that the research productivity of the Institute will show significant improvement.

3.9 *Disseminating research output*

The Institute will have to evolve an ambitious plan to disseminate the results of its research. The Publication Unit of the Institute is being expanded and modernised to meet the changing requirements. The Institute has already started disseminating the results of its research through a number of “working papers” which eventually will find their place in reputed refereed journals. The Journal of Social and Economic Development is expected to become an important medium where many researchable issues will be published and debated. The Institute would have a series of seminars, workshops and brainstorming sessions from time to time not only to discuss issues of contemporary relevance, but also to disseminate its own findings of research in several areas of social relevance. The Institute also has an ambitious plan of publishing many of its studies in the form of books.

3.10 *Linkages*

A high performing quality research institute should have close links with premier research institutions in social science both in India and abroad. Reaping economies of scale and scope is possible only when it works closely with other institutions in the region. This will help in the optimum utilisation of sub-optimal spread of limited resources across several institutions. Inter-institutional interactions of faculty and students will go a long way not only to build harmonious relationships, but will also help in building collaborative programmes.

The Institute has already established close relationship with research and training institutions of repute in India such as the Institute of Rural Management, Anand, Institute of Economic Growth, Delhi, National Institute of Public Finance and Policy, New Delhi and Madras School of Economics, and Madras Institute of Developing Studies, Chennai. Attempts will be made to develop close relationship between social science research institutions in other parts of the world as well in the coming years.

The Directors of ICSSR institutions in the southern part of the country decided in their meeting held in April 2000 to build a consortium of ICSSR social science research institutions. The collaborating institutions in this besides ISEC include, Madras Institute of Development Studies, Chennai, Centre for Development Studies, Trivandrum, Centre for Economic and Social Studies, Hyderabad and Centre for Multi-disciplinary Research, Dharwad. A number of collaborative activities have been explored in the meeting. This includes, holding an annual Convention on Development on a specified theme in one of the five institutions every year by rotation, exchange of faculty and students and undertaking collaborative research projects. With the passage of time and improvement in technology, the networking with other social science research institutions will be strengthened.

4. What the Society Should Do for Social Science Research

4.1 *Social Sciences and Society*

It is common to regard social science research as an elitist activity not deserving high priority in our educational strategy and policy. There is some justification for this viewpoint as the higher education as a whole has received so far much more emphasis and resources leading to neglect of the basics like universalisation of primary education. At the same time, it is necessary to realise that the techno-bureaucratic approach on which we have relied so far would not take us much farther in broadbasing our polity and economy and in building up a society based on justice. In future, the present approach would need a strong complement based on ideas now gaining ground—human development, institutions, governance, empowerment, participation, preservation of pluralism and identities etc. This is a field in which policymaking could hardly move forward without a steady and dependable feedback, insights and guidance from social science research.

Looked at from this perspective about the emerging role of social science research in policymaking for development of Indian society, the institutional network developed by ICSSR would be seen as a valuable infrastructure to be conserved and effectively used in future. In fact, linkage between this network and the expanding university network, which is getting closer to the grassroots, would give us a strong foundation for social science research capable of providing adequate inputs for policymaking as well as for theory building.

Enough has been said in the ISEC vision for future to indicate that there is substantial scope to make social science research economically viable—building up a corpus, eliminating dead-weight overheads, privatisation of services, rationalisation of administrative and supporting staff and augmenting earnings by using faculty expertise (e.g. projects and consultancy assignments of ISEC as well as of individual faculty members) and rich data bases.

However, social science research would still need continuing support for the following reasons: the transition from the present dependence on grants to self-supporting status would need time to avoid dislocation and distress to existing personnel. Social science research would have to strike a careful balance between activities yielding large returns and those – like Ph.D. programme—where returns accrue to society and not to institutions. It may be difficult and also unfair to expect the institutions to fully cross-subsidise the latter activities by returns earned from marketable activities.

Hence, for another three decades, it would need patient and careful nurturing of social science research institutions, personnel and facilities. Particular attention would have to be paid to progressive modernisation of facilities, capacity building of faculty, increased accountability along with a fair reward system and rehabilitation of weak institutions. It would be important to have continuing government support though the quantum of support may decline over time. Industries, banks, large trusts and foundations would have to be far more generous than the support they give now. It is to be hoped that the vision document

would be of some help in creating awareness among both the categories of supporters about their responsibility towards social science research.

While the initial burst of enthusiasm by the Central and State governments has been the setting up of many an institution to undertake social science research in the 1970's, their hardening budget constraint has posed difficulties in these institutions to become viable and thus, has prevented consolidation of gains from these institutions. At the same time, lack of visibility and considering social sciences as "soft" subjects has not only led to talented youngsters moving away from the studies. Rejuvenation of research in social sciences would require resetting of priorities and substantial investment by the society.

ISEC's ability to contribute to society, as detailed in the previous sections, has been adversely affected by the constraints it faces on the financial front. While the present attempt to reengineer the institution would enhance its capacity, the society should shoulder the responsibility of enabling the flow of finances to ensure a measure of certainty, improve the infrastructure, upgrade the knowledge base and help to build capacity.

Significant additional investments are needed to make ISEC the institution of excellence in social science research and training. Additional funding will go a long way towards: (i) refocusing research in emerging areas; (ii) capacity development of the faculty; (iii) library upgradation; (iv) improved infrastructure; (v) instituting follow-ups to young social scientists to work in emerging areas; (vi) establishing a comprehensive data bank in social sciences; and above all (vii) ensuring a measure of certainty.

ISEC is the largest ICSSR social science research institute in the country. Over the years, it has made significant contributions to the study of economy, society and polity and has impact on the society in a variety of ways. ISEC is envisioned to be an institution of excellence and concerted efforts are made to reengineer it to achieve the goal. It is hoped that both the government and the private sector will contribute to its achieving excellence in social science research and training in the country.

***“The woods are lovely, dark and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep”***

Robert Frost
Stopping by the Woods in a Snowy Evening.