

Social Issues/Challenges Faced By Engineers in India

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India has the largest number of engineering graduates passing out every year when compared to the USA. But does our Engineering profession get recognized in the eyes of law? The answer is NO when compared to our Medical Professionals or Chartered Accountants or Architects. There is the Medical Council of India [1956] to regulate Doctors, the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India [1949] to regulate Chartered Accountants, and the Council of Architecture [1972] to regulate Architects, and all of these professional bodies are protected by statutes or by an act of parliament. In most countries, e.g., Australia, Japan, Canada, Malaysia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, South Africa, Singapore, Tanzania, USA, UK, etc., professions such as Engineers are invariably governed by an act or law of the Government.

To delve into the historical facts - a committee under the chairmanship of S.G. Bharve was set up by the erstwhile Planning Commission in Feb'1966 to the issues concerning Technical Consultancy Services. The Committee's Report submitted in 1970, recommended "In order to develop the profession on healthy lines. To avoid undesirable elements/practices there should be an all-India Institution along the lines of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India to lay down proper standards of Education, Experience, Capability Capacity, etc. The report further recommended that 'Legislation could be undertaken to make it [The Institution] a legal entity parallel to that of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India which was set up just after independence in 1949.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi declared 2019-20 as the Construction Technology year and in 2021 Padma Shri E.Sreedharan in his letter dated 13/10/2021 to PM Modi had enquired about the Professional Engineers Bill in view of the demand for the ongoing 100 lakh crores infrastructural development project. He asked about the status of the Bill after its passing by the AICTE but lying with the Ministry of Higher Education [earlier MHRD] for more than 1 year. The secretary MHE, K. Sanjay Murthy [IAS] on 25/11/2021 replied that the relevance of the proposed Bill was examined in the light of the New Education Policy [NEP], 2020 which is now in force. The NEP, 2020 envisages a setting up of a Higher Education Commission of India [HECI] of which the National Higher Education Regulatory Council [NHERC] will be a vertical. NHERC & HECI "will function as a common, single-point regulator for the higher education sector including teacher education & excluding medical/legal education, thus eliminating the duplication & disfunction of regulatory efforts by the multiple regulatory agencies....." They should be first formed and all concerns regarding the regulation of the profession of engineering would be addressed by the proposed structure of NHERC & HECI.

As a fallout, the social issues like multi-pronged repeated registration of engineers in various local bodies, indemnity bond issues in the Real Estate Regulation Act, Insurance & Banking sectors having infinite liabilities, issuances of arbitrary structural stability certificates, and many other repugnant issues still continue to haunt the nation in general and the engineers in particular thus making the environment of engineering profession a very risky state of affairs especially in India in the 21st century.

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