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Manish Gupta could have easily settled as an administrative officer in a university at Jalandhar, Punjab. But the 35-year-old chose otherwise. While he continued to execute administrative protocols, he chose to pursue a doctoral degree in E-Governance in Human Resource Management in his spare time. "PhD helps in gaining complete knowledge about a subject. My research topic helps me earn better and allows me to participate in the bigger role of development," said Gupta.

Gupta represents the emerging breed of executives who equip themselves with specialised skill sets by either taking a break from their career or studying part time. Research-based industry-oriented topics are gaining momentum. In the area of Business Management, PhD majors in Finance, Accounting, Marketing, and Management are much sought after.

A PhD programme is important for two special tasks - research and teaching. PhD programmes are specifically designed to build these capabilities through coursework and original research. High end research in academics as well as research-based consulting can be addressed through such programmes. Certain disciplines lend themselves to PhD studies.

"In the industrial sector, particularly product development, India has lagged behind and is still dependent on foreign companies. With students gaining an expertise in a field, they shall render huge support to growth of the sector," highlighted Ashok Mittal, chancellor, LPU.

And with this comes an attractive pay packet. "New PhD (called the Fellow program graduates from IIMs and XLRI) are in good demand with salaries of about 12 lakh and more. With all Indian schools seeking international accreditation, the need for qualified PhDs is increasing," explained Dr Sankaran P Raghunathan, dean, The National Management School, Chennai.

However, the scenario wasn't the same till about three years



ago, as PhD programmes had lost out to Tech courses. Now the focus has changed. With IT firms losing their sheen to an extent, PhD is back on the track, with a difference. "The thrust is on inter-disciplinary research cutting across formal discipline domains. The major areas where PhD enrollment is high is Culture studies, Public policy and Analysis, Management, Computer Science, Aerospace Engineering, Languages, Biotechnology, Electronics Engineering, Physics, Civil Engineering and Psychology, with a focus on inter-disciplinary work," explained Dr Sandeep Shastri, province chancellor, Jain University.

This emerging trend has encouraged collaborative programmes between Indian and foreign universities, and

has urged IT companies to forge ties with educational institutions. Earlier in the year, H P Labs India announced the launch of the next set of 'BITS-H P Labs India PhD Fellowships' in collaboration with the Birla Institute of Technology & Science (BITS), Pilani. The fellowship is designed to further research in information and communication technologies.

"Through this initiative, we look forward to attract candidates of exceptional abilities for research in cutting-edge technologies relevant to countries such as India," said Sudhir Dixit, lab director, H P Labs India. Multimodal Human Computer Interfaces, Indian Language Information Retrieval, Ontology Based Web Mining, Mobile-Cloud Security

and Cloud Services and Protocols are among the topics offered for doctoral degree.

"The fellowship will help us proactively contribute to the development of elite research professionals - individuals who will make tangible contributions to society globally, including India," added Prof Ravi Prakash, dean, Research and Consultancy Division, BITS, Pilani, throwing light on the collaboration.

However, getting enrolled for a PhD degree isn't easy. The selection process is stringent and sifts the best talent. In 2009-2010, 27 students were enrolled for PhD courses which increased to 30 in 2010-2011 at LPU. The Jain University is now into its third batch of the PhD programme. In the first batch there were 50 students,

which increased to 62 in the second round. The number of students who have enrolled for Quantitative Methods & Information Systems at IIM-B has increased from 4 in 2008 to 10 in 2010, likewise Economics & Social Sciences Production & Operations Management has seen an increase from 2 students in 2008 to 6 in 2010.

"In the recent years, the Fellow Research has been on issues such as Technology and Innovation, International Business, Functioning of Markets, Pricing, Impact of Information, and Infrastructure projects," said Professor Gopal Naik, Economics & Social Sciences Area, IIM Bangalore (IIM-B). "In the last few years, we have increased the number of intake. IIMB's aim is to help build other management institutions in India through our Fellow Programme. Institute supports this programme through internal resources," added Professor Naik, IIM-B.

An out-of-the box thinking approach can help PhD holders make a mark. "At the rate of 8% growth, the economy needs several thousands of teachers at all levels. While all teachers need not have a PhD degree, a person with PhD training can generate several other non-PhD teachers. Unless knowledge is created and kept current by continued research, application of that knowledge becomes difficult," explained Dr Raghunathan.

With innovations taking place in IT and Electronics, the industry wants students who have cleared their PhDs to assist in the process of new development. Besides that, medical transcription also attracts doctors. Companies like CBaySystems, a provider of technologically enabled medical transcription services, absorb PhDs in the production centres in India.

Finally, one can always stick to the tried and tested method of teaching. The shortage of professors with a PhD qualification is so acute that the job prospects for fresh PhDs are very high. The job prospects are enhanced with quality research as part of the PhD. More so, for a teaching post or a position in a research lab/organisation, a PhD in the relevant domain enhances one's employability prospects.