Announcements

ASERF has instituted **Dr Stya Paul Young** Educationist Award' for honouring Young Educationists who have demonstrated their potential by making an impact on Indian education. Applications from the eligible scholars are invited for the Award of the year 2011. Click here to download the prescribed format along with the terms and conditions.

Apeejay Stya University announces admission for the session 2011-12

Apeejay Stya University is offering diverse catalogue of technical, scientific, management and liberal arts courses for the academic session 2011-12. Applicants for admission accepted on the basis of comprehensive merit, judged by their academic excellence, their extracurricular achievements, and their utilization of the resources they have had available. As part of the application, the University recognize a number of examination scores to establish academic excellence, including AIEEE, GMAT, SAT, SAT-II. **For more,** *click here*

Apeejay Stya University announces Founder's Scholarship

On the Death anniversary of our beloved founder Dr. Stya Paul, Apeejay Stya University (ASU), Haryana announces a Merit - Based Scholarship Scheme *for Undergraduate, Post Graduate and MBA Courses*

Please visit our website for more: click here

Get Involved

Fellowship opportunities

Fellowships for six months to two years in variety of fields.

Workshops/Guest Lectures

Regular workshops and lectures on a variety of subjects.

Scholarships

Need-based financial aid to deserving student

Faculty Sponsorships

By seeding a named faculty seat or fellowship

Internships/Mentoring

The University has many students looking for opportunities to put their skills to practical use. Internships can be in diverse areas from services, government and nonprofit.

Please visit our website for more: click here

Also discover the Apeejay Edge: click here

Partnership

Dear Partners,

The Apeejay Stya Education Research Foundation (ASERF) invites news, articles, resource material, opinions and analyses on relevant educational issues that can be highlighted in our by-monthly e-bulletins and on the ASERF portal.

We request if you could spare a few moments of your valuable time to have a look at our website and guide us on our regular initiatives.

Editor

Dr. Mithilesh Kumar Singh

CONTENT

Aspect

Indian education, employment sector - a study in contrasts

News

1. Amendments to the Prohibition of Unfair Practices Bill, 2010
2. 'Less expensive education attract US students to India'
3. NIT Council Meets : Endorses Ramaswami Committee Recommendation
4. Former SC judges oppose Bill on Biotechnology
5. Pearson bolsters presence in China with $294m purchase of GETG
6. India, US looking to partner in education sector
7. Fewer US students visit India
8. IIM Ahmedabad student's vision makes blind see
9. Omnia invests Rs 7 crore in early-stage education firms
10. 161 awards announced in UKIERI 2
11. Kapil Sibal reaches out to UPA MPs for passage of education reform bills
12. Reforms in Teachers Education
13. Admission of Poor in Private Schools
14. Imparting Quality Education
15. TATA Power helps conduct Education for Education in Nirsa Block
16. Fewer takers for primary education in Gujarat
17. A Kotecha contributes towards India's universities
18. They're opening up campuses in India
19. Democratic Students' Organisation protests against anti-education bills
20. Proposals to Provide Aakash Tablets to Students
21. Pupil-Teacher Ratio
22. U.S. official pursuing India education mission
23. IIITs give nod to single national-level entrance test
24. Government accepts GMAT to globalize business education
25. UK university launches $400,000 scholarships for Indians
26. Educationally Backward Areas
27. Rs 3,000 cr investment for new Pharma institutes
28. Financial Assistance to SC/ST Students
29. Technology: educational divider or equalizer?
30. The new visa rules encourage quality students
31. Want to study at a Meta University?
32. Gain easy access to education
33. Slowdown hits construction, IT, pharma courses
34. IIT to train edu chiefs in mgmt, leadership
35. Pakistan may take leaf out of CBSE book

Analysis/Opinion/Innovative Practice

1. Foreign varsities can make Indian education job-oriented
2. NIIT pioneered IT education in India
3. We need to educate students with high level of competence
4. Problems force shift in govt's higher education plan
5. Education is formation of personality
6. Industry, academia tie-up looks to aid education in smaller cities
7. Good school, good graduate
8. Celebrating 60 years of top-notch engineering education
9. How a weak rupee will affect student borrowers
10. Technology will increase achievement
11. University students increase rapidly, but university lecturers do not increase accordingly
12. College education not on a par with global standards, says NAAC director
13. Getting it right on Education
14. Experts stress on skills to teach spl kids
15. Indian students should consider studying in China'
16. A subject that won't vanish
17. Education sector needs urgent reforms
18. Collaboration in higher education is major pillar in U.S.-India dialogue'
19. Leadership is India's biggest worry: Jim O' Neill, Economist, Goldman Sachs
20. Is education still the best route to take?
21. Asia's students weigh up college options
22. Schools of the future

Resources

1. Fewer US students visit India
2. Indicus Analytics: Education scores low
3. Survey on Standard of Education in India
4. No child's play
5. Mc Graw-Hill Research Foundation Policy - Skilled and Educated Global Workforce

Indian education, employment sector - a study in contrasts

The yin and the yang of Indian education and employment sectors present a fascinating study in contrasts. Speak to an educationist and you will be swept away on the rising tide of optimism generated by a groundswell of enrolment.

Talk to anyone in the private sector and you will get an earful about labour shortages. Labour market outcomes also present a similarly confusing picture. In the 1980s, a college graduate had over 70% probability of finding a white-collar job. This dropped to less than 50% in the last decade. However, shortage of qualified workers continues to drive up campus recruitment packages to dizzying heights.

How do we reconcile these contrasting pictures? The key to understanding this contrast lies in the word 'qualified'. The increase in our education levels has been accompanied by a decline in quality, creating a growing pool of unemployable college graduates.

The India Human Development Survey, conducted by the National Council of Applied Economic Research and University of Maryland, provides a striking example. In this survey of over 41,000 households conducted in 2004-05, each cohort is more likely to finish college than the previous cohort. Among males born in 1930s, only 4% completed college. Among those born in 1970s, 13% completed college.

However, even on rudimentary skills such as ability to converse fluently in English, these new college graduates appear to fare more poorly than the college graduates of their fathers' generation.

Of male graduates born in the 1930s, 53% are fluent in English compared to only 31% among those who were born in the 1970s. This does not mean that the number of English speakers in India has gone down since rising education levels make up for some of the quality decline.

However, had these new graduates retained the same skill levels as those born in 1940s, India would have had 50% more English-speaking college graduates. Since English fluency brings enormous economic returns, and increases wages by at least 12%, this increase in English speakers would have had enormous economic dividend.

We have few other markers of skills to compare across generations. If we were to give mathematics tests to adults, it is most likely that we would also see a decline in simple skills such as dividing fractions or solving basic algebraic equations.

What accounts for this decline? Part of the answer lies in the speed with which enrolments have risen. Rising demand for higher education can no longer be met with traditional colleges and a host of creative solutions ranging from private colleges to distance education are being embraced with little attention to quality. While students must meet some minimum standards to pass the examination, rote learning to prepare for the examination has become the norm.

But the other part of this answer is even more intractable. As enrolments rise and education is no longer the preserve of the elite, greater demands are placed on educators to teach students who are first-generation learners.

Many studies document that early childhood home environment with educated parents results in higher vocabulary and other academic skills that shape the child's future performance. When students from marginalised background enter the educational stream, the education system needs to recognise this added challenge and focus on replacing home inputs with school inputs. However, instead of rising to this challenge of rapidly democratising student body, schools and colleges have started outsourcing education.

Private tutoring is the norm even for young students. The India Human Development Survey found that 20% of children aged 6-14 years are securing private tutoring and perversely it is the more privileged children, those with educated background and living in metro cities, who take private tuitions rather than children from less-privileged backgrounds who may have the greatest need to make up for early education deficit.

This privatisation of school education has devastating consequences when we look at the composition of students entering colleges. Renowned colleges of Delhi University now demand extremely high examination marks in board exams to admit students. This high-performance demand is met through extreme investment in coaching, beyond the reach of students from lower socioeconomic strata. These students often flock to private educational institutions and distance education classes where they are unable to gain the skills that a traditional college imparts, thereby perpetuating a vicious cycle of low performance.

Can this skill deficit be remedied? Of course it can be, but first we need to recognise that we are facing a crisis.

Much of the policy discourse focuses on the need to expand educational opportunities with no attention to declining quality of skills we are imparting. Educational expansion and democratisation of education is a wonderful goal that is rendered meaningless if these new graduates are unemployable.

Source: November 26, 2011/[Economic Times](#)

NEWS

Amendments to the Prohibition of Unfair Practices in Technical Educational Institutions, Medical Educational Institutions and Universities Bill, 2010

The Union Cabinet today approved the official amendment to the Prohibition of Unfair Practices in Technical Educational Institutions, Medical Educational Institutions and Universities Bill, 2010 based on the recommendations of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on HRD for consideration of the Parliament.

The Bill aims to provide an institutional mechanism for preventing, prohibiting and punishing unfair practices in technical and medical educational institutions and universities.

The object is to curtail the element of profiteering in some institutions which are presently beyond the scope of any such regulation.

The institutions are also expected to mandatorily disclose information related to admission process by publication of its prospectus. This would bring about public accountability of such institutions and act as a check on use of unfair practices being adopted vis-a-vis students.

The provisions of mandatory disclosure of information related to the admission process and holding the institution accountable in respect of compliance with such information is an innovation over the inspection based regulatory processes normally adopted. The student or any other stakeholder can move the tribunal as well as the competent criminal court of law in case the institutions attempts to adopt unfair practices and the burden of proof would be upon the institution.

The students would stand to benefit by enactment of a legislation to curb unfair practices in admission and other areas of higher educational institutions, who are exposed to the prevalence of distortions in the admission process leading to harassment and extortion of students for admission.

Prompt and effective deterrent action is constrained in the absence of any Central law prohibiting capitation fee and other unfair practices. While the current policy in higher education is to promote autonomy of institutions, adoption of unfair practices by misusing autonomy would be detrimental for the credibility of the higher education sector.

It would be in public interest to balance autonomy of higher education institutions with measures to protect the interests of students and others accessing higher education.

Background:

(i) There has been an unprecedented growth in higher education in recent years, of which the growth of higher professional education, especially technical and medical education has been mainly through private participation. The current national policy supported by several judicial pronouncements is against commercialization of higher education, though the policy encourages private "note for profit" participation with surplus revenues to be ploughed back for growth and development of institutions.

(ii)   There is public concern that technical and medical educational institutions, and universities should not resort to unfair practices, Such as charging of capitation fee and demanding donations for admitting students, not issuing receipts in respect of payments made by or on behalf of students, admission to professional programmes of study through non-transparent and questionable admission processes, low quality delivery of education services and false claims of quality of such service through misleading advertisements, engagement of unqualified or ineligible teaching faculty, forcible withholding of certificates and other documents of students.

Source: November 16, 2011/ [PIB](#)

Less expensive education attract US students to India'

The less expensive education in India with quality has attracted more American students to Indian universities, a US official said.

"I think that's one of the attractions. Certainly, it's no secret that the cost of education in the United States is increasing and it's pretty high. Part of it is the increasing awareness of the value and quality of education in India," Anand Krishna, Information Officer with the US Consulate General here told reporters.

According to a data released by United States India Educational Foundation (USIEF), there has been a 44.4 per cent increase in the number of American students studying in Indian universities.

"IIMs and IITs certainly attract American students...Their interest may also ultimately be in journalism and locally they may look at Asian College of Journalism. But the fact that they are looking at schools in India now is important," he said.

Last year it was 2,690 students while this year it is 3,884, he said.

Source: November 18, 2011/ Times of India

NIT Council Meets : Endorses Ramaswami Committee Recommendation

Shri Kapil Sibal, Union Minister for Human Resource Development Chaired the meeting of the Council of NITs today which was largely attended by the Chairpersons and Board of Governors National Institutes of Technologies. During the meeting, the Council took the following major decisions:-

• The Council considered the proposal formulated by Dr. T. Ramasami Committee on Alternate System for Admission to undergraduate programmes in Science and Engineering in the country as presented before the IIT Council. It endorsed the same. There was a consensus in the Council that this proposal envisages a judicious mix of school and national level test performance and it will usher in an alternative admission system wherein multiplicity of tests and dependency on coaching would get reduced in a great measure, aligning the testing process to class XIIth syllabus.

• The Council accorded 'in-principle' approval for introduction of revised NIT Merit Award, with fee tuition fee waiver on graded basis, to all those students who were ranked in the top bracket of the AIEEE examination conducted by the CBSE and who took admission in the NIT. Besides enlarging the scope of the beneficiaries, it also proposes exclusive scholarships for meritorious SC/ST and OBC students. It is expected that the revised Merit Award system would be put in place from the academic year 2012-12.

• The Council deliberated upon and resolved various policy issues plaguing the NIT system in relation to the appointment of faculty and non-faculty staff, and Career Advancement Scheme in respect of teaching staff. It also decided that four-tier flexible system for faculty appointment, as existing in the IIT system, be introduced in NITs as well.

Source: November 18, 2011/ PIB

Former SC judges oppose Bill on Biotechnology

Before the start of Parliament's winter session, former judges of Supreme Court has questioned the efficacy of three government bills on new regulatory authority for bio-technology, unfair practices in higher education and constitution of education tribunals.

The winter session has hectic agenda for MPs as there are over 30 bill lists for introduction or consideration including six education bills and the Bio-technology Regulatory Authority Bill.

The former judges of Supreme Court S P Jeevan Reddy, Kuldeep Singh and M H Kania in a similar statement have expressed serious concern saying the ministry mandated to promote bio-technology was introducing the bill. They also said that the regulatory framework should have experts from other related ministries such as environment, agriculture, health and rural development.

"The primary mandate of any biotechnology bill must be to ensure safety to consumers, farmers and the environment and not to facilitate quick clearances," the judges said.

They also found the bill lacking in ensuring that citizens have a right to reject a Genetically Modified food, gram sabha refusal to all sowing of GM food crops and ensure that there is no contamination of environment because of GM crops.

"The penalties for transgressing of the rights of consumers or farmers to be GM free and for any environmental damage must be of a deterrent nature and quickly enforceable," they said.

In another set of view, former chief justices of India, A S Anand, Madan Mohan Punchhi and K N Singh had claimed that the government does not have legal competence to set regulatory mechanisms for universities as it was a domain of the state legislative bodies.

Their view was sought by Association of Self Financing Universities on HRD ministry's Education Tribunal Bill and Prohibition of Unfair Practices in Technical, Medical and Universities Bill. These bills aim at setting up regulatory mechanisms at centre and state levels to address issues of concern in higher education including capitation fee, inadequate teaching facility and problem related to teachers.

The views of the former chief justices are based on entries in the Constitution related to matters on incorporation, regulation and winding up of the universities.

They said it was exclusively a state subject. The government, however, differ saying that there already is the University Grants Commission set up under a Central Law to regulate universities.

In addition to contrary legal views, Members of Parliament cutting across party lines have also opposed the proposed laws on different grounds.

Source: November 20, 2011/Hindustan Times

Pearson bolsters presence in China with $294m purchase of GETG

Acquisition of Global Education and Technology Group expands Pearson's reach in China from eight cities to 60. Pearson has purchased English-language test company Global Education and Technology Group (GETG) in a deal worth $294m, its largest acquisition to date in the booming Chinese learning market.

The company, owner of the Financial Times and book publisher Penguin, said the acquisition will expand the company's reach in China from eight cities to 60. Pearson has acquired the company, which was founded in 2001 and is listed on the Nasdaq stock exchange, for a headline price of $294m.

However, the deal will cost Pearson $155m in cash, with the balance of the deal offset by GETG holding a cash balance of $139m.

GETG provides English language test preparation services for students with 450 centres across 60 cities in China. It is expected to make $65m in revenues this year. Pearson said the deal will enable it to expand beyond English language teaching.

In 2009, Pearson acquired a chain of English-language schools for adults, called Wall Street English, for $145m.The year before that the company acquired a chain called Longman Schools, for children.

"Through organic investment and complementary acquisitions, we're learning a lot about the very significant growth opportunities we see in China and about the value of combining our content and technology with high-quality school networks," said John Fallon, chief executive of Pearson's International Education Business.

Source: November 21, 2011/The Guardian.UK

India, US looking to partner in education sector

India and the US were looking at a "range of ways," to partner across areas of education and promoting research and scholarship which has been a hallmark of the bilateral partnership, a senior US official said today.

"Promoting research and scholarship has been a hallmark of the US-India partnership, providing scholars the opportunity to collaborate and share their ideas with new communities," US Consul general Jennifer A McIntyre said.

In her address at the Madras Christian College (MCC) near here while promoting International Education Week, she said while more than one lakh Indian students were currently studying in the US, "an increasing number of Americans are discovering India as a quality educational destination".

"Our two governments are partnering to offer Fulbright - Nehru Awards, higher education fellowships for the most outstanding students, academics and professionals in India and the US to study, research and engage in work experiences that benefit both countries," she said.

India had the largest Fulbright scholar exchange programs worldwide, with more than 17,000 fellowships and other grants awarded to Indians and Americans, she added.

Source: November 22, 2011/Economic Times

Fewer US students visit India

Despite touting to have a good English-speaking faculty and despite being the home ground of most Silicon Valley entrepreneurs, India fails to attract students from United States of America.

India stands at 14th place when it comes to number of US students going abroad for higher education. However, the sub-continent ranks second as far students joining US educational institutions goes.

The US Institute of International Education recently released the Open Doors report, which is a comprehensive information resource on international students and scholars studying or teaching at higher education institutions in the United States, and U.S. students studying abroad for academic credit at their home colleges or universities.

Of the 2,70,604 US students going abroad for higher education only 3,884 came to India in 2009-10, an increase of 44.4 per cent over the previous year's figures. Countries like South Africa (13th rank—4,313 students), Costa Rica (10th rank—6,262 students), Italy (2nd place—27,940 students) and Mexico (8th rank—7,157 students) have attracted more US students than India.

However students from India, the second largest international segment in the United States,

decreased by one percent to a total now of nearly 1.04 lakhs. While slightly declining in numbers, students from India still represent 14 percent of all international students in U.S. higher education.

Asked about his comments on the issue, Dr John E. Dooley, vice-president, Virginia Tech said it is because of lack of knowledge about the 21st century India among US students that the numbers are less.

"I think US students need to visit India and interact with universities here to prepare themselves to see the global market place. US students don't know India but they have learnt more about South Africa in the last decade as the football world cup in South Africa did a remarkable job to introduce the country to US students," he said.

Former Anna University vice-chancellor and member of state planning commission Prof. E. Balagurusamy recalled that a couple of years ago University Grants Commission (UGC) constituted a committee and conducted visit India programme but that did not yield any big results.

"Indian Universities don't offer different courses which the American students want to study and also the institutions don't provide proper accommodation and security. So I don't think we will get more US students. We should provide courses like study about Indian heritage, culture and temples which they would like to take up", he pointed out.

Source: November 22, 2011/Deccan Chronicles

IIM Ahmedabad student's vision makes blind see

Technology - software that reads out scripts from online textbooks - has helped the visually impaired pursue higher studies. But even the latest technologies have limitations.

For example, while reading out sums in correct mathematical context and dealing with square roots.

To tackle this problem, an Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad (IIMA) student from the postgraduate programme for executives (PGPX) Tom Tillo has come up with an innovative solution. In his project 'Enabling Inclusive Education in Mathematics and Science for Visually Impaired Students in India' Tom has come up with a technique where the software also reads hardcore mathematics sums.

The idea behind the project is to enable blind students learn maths and science online. Tillo said that according to experts not many blind students take up maths and science after class VII and the prime reason for this is that textbooks in Braille are not available or are too expensive.

He has designed the project under the 'Globalising and Resurgent India through Innovative Transformation (GRIT)' - an elective course at the institute and also presented it before Dr APJ Abdul Kalam recently.

"As they do not go for maths and science blind students cannottake up jobs in the areas of technology or pure science. I found that the available software in the market cannot read mathematics because it is in HTML but if it is converted to MathML the software would be able to help blind students," he said.

However, Tillo said there were some limitations in the project as it cannot read graphics and charts but he will work on those angles.

Source: November 22, 2011/DNA India

Omnia invests Rs 7 crore in early-stage education firms

Omnia Investments, the venture fund set up by the promoters of Spice Mobility, has made its maiden investment in two earlystage startups.

The fund has invested Rs 7 crore in candidate assessment venture Single Stop and in higher education firm Sunstone for a significant minority stake.

Omnia Investments was launched less than a year ago by Dilip Modi, Managing Director of the $2-billion (Rs 10,000 crore) mobility product and retail conglomerate Spice Mobility, with an initial corpus of Rs 20 crore. The fund will focus on education and technology. It is not part of the Spice Mobility group.

"Corporates have long viewed education through the corporate social responsibility lens," said Modi, who is also the president of industry body Assocham. "But education provides a large business opportunity as well."

India's rapidly growing education sector has attracted considerable risk capital in recent months. The education market in the country is projected to cross $50 billion (Rs 2.5 lakh crore) by 2015, said a study by Assocham.

Last month, CLSA Capital invested over $20 million in test preparation company Resonance Eduventures. Venture fund Helion Advisors made a

$3.5 million investment in affordable education provider Vienova Education in September. The same month, two other venture investments were made in education firms: Online education start-up Eduora Technologies got funding from early-stage fund Seeders and learning technology startup Sparsha raised money from Blume Ventures and Tempus Capital.

A recent KPMG report said the test assessment market is poised for rapid growth. Govind Wakhlu and Prashant Pitti, founders of six-month old Single Stop, believe that companies will increasingly outsource the initial candidate assessment process to third-party vendors.

Single Stop provides assessment tests for fresh graduates who are targeting entrylevel jobs in sales, backend operations and other support functions.

The firm administers the Common Job Test, which is a standardised exam to understand a candidate's areas of strength, and sends out the scores to partner companies.

"There is a huge gap in the entry-level job segment. Companies are not getting the right candidate and job seekers are not getting the right jobs," said Wakhlu, an Illinois Technology Institute graduate who returned to India in 2010. The test was launched last month and around 300 candidates have taken it so far.

Omnia's other investment, Sunstone, provides a one-year MBA programme solely for techies. It was launched last year by Rajul Garg, the former co-founder of offshore R&D venture GlobalLogic.

"With the growth of the IT industry, we need leaders who have a background in IT to run companies," said Garg. "Our aim is to create tech CEOs." The course is for working professionals and the first batch started five months ago.

Spice Mobility's Modi said they expect to close more investments in two months. Modi has also launched a social fund, Ek Soch Mission, which will provide grants to entrepreneurs who want to set up ventures in mobile value-added services (VAS), education and clean energy.

Source: November 22, 2011/Economic Times

161 awards announced in UKIERI 2

The UK-India Education and Research Initiative (UKIERI) has entered its second phase with 161 awards announced for institutes from the two countries this year.

Started in April 2006, the bilateral initiative for greater educational engagement between India and the United Kingdom has been extended till 2016. The awards are for joint projects, leadership development for the education sector, thematic partnerships for innovation, student mobility and skill development.

Among the nearly 400 institutions partnering in 2011-12 from the two sides are All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Indian Institute of Science, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, SN Bose National Centre for Basic Sciences, Indian Institute of Chemical Technology, Imperial College, King's College, University of Exeter, and the University of East London.

With about 30 million pounds from the UK, India and corporate houses such as the Tatas, about 800 grants are to be given during the second phase, said Malyaj Virmani, head - UKIERI, scholarships and skill development.

The UKIERI awards for this year were announced in the presence of David Willets, UK minister for universities and science, and Kapil Sibal, human resource development minister, at reception in New Delhi. The ministers also chaired the UK-India Education Forum.

At the event, Rob Lynes, director, British Council and Paul Boyle, director, Economic and Social Research Council (UK) signed a letter of intent for doctoral mobility programmes.

Source: November 22, 2011/Hindustan Times

Kapil Sibal reaches out to UPA MPs for passage of education reform bills

Human resources development minister Kapil Sibal is trying to push through key education reform bills in the winter session of Parliament.

Sibal met MPs to discuss the legislations and to address their concerns and misgivings, on Monday, in the third of such meetings with legislators belonging to UPA and supporting parties.

Monday's meeting was attended by Congress MP from Himachal Pradesh Viplov Thakur, Mabel Rebello from Jharkhand and Ijyaraj Singh from Rajasthan. In earlier meetings, officials made detailed presentations of the bills. Issues such as funding running costs of education tribunals and questions on accreditation of colleges were also raised.

In the last two Parliament sessions, education bills were derailed by Congress MPs and hence Sibal's decision to concentrate on MPs of the ruling alliance. On two occasions, crucial education legislations could not be passed in the Rajya Sabha

after Congress members objected. The legislation to put in place a system of tribunals to deal with issues relating to education institutions was delayed for an entire session as Congress MP from Andhra Pradesh, Keshava Rao, opposed what he described as "Sibal's haste" to pass the bill.

In the monsoon session, three legislations were derailed by Jesudasu Seelam, another Congress MP from Andhra Pradesh, over the issue of reservation in faculty appointment.

Sibal's first round of consultations in late October was attended by nine MPs, including Shashi Tharoor, PL Punia, Nirmal Khatri, Naveen Jindal, all Congress, and Supriya Sule of NCP. The second meeting, held earlier this month, was attended by Jesudasu Seelam and PJ Kurien of Congress, Rajniti Prasad of RJD and Ram Gopal Yadav of Samajwadi Party.

The absence of information was one reason why the Indian Institute of Information Technology, Design and Manufacturing, Kancheepuram Bill, 2011, The Institutes of Technology (Amendment) Bill, 2011, and the National Institutes of Technology (Amendment) Bill, 2011, could not be passed in the monsoon session of Parliament.

The government hopes that Sibal's effort to reach out to UPA MPs to address their concerns will yield results. There is a sense of impatience with the inordinate delays in passage of these legislations. Recently, Sam Pitroda, advisor to the prime minister on Public Information Infrastructure and Innovations, called for the early passage of all 12 bills related to the HRD ministry, suggesting that they can be "fine tuned" later. Pitroda, who headed the National Knowledge Commission in UPA I, is aware of knowledge institutions and infrastructure that the country requires to be competitive.

Source: November 23, 2011/Economic Times

Reforms in Teachers Education

The Government and the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) have held extensive consultations with the State Governments, Universities and other stakeholders for initiating reforms in the teacher education system in the country, and have received suggestions for revision in the Centrally Sponsored Scheme on Teacher Education, teacher qualification norms, development of a national framework on teacher education, amendments in the NCTE Regulations on recognition norms and procedures, development of syllabus and curriculum and evaluation procedure for various teacher education courses, etc.

Several initiatives have been taken for reforming the teacher education system, including development of a new National Curriculum Framework on Teacher Education, development of 'model' syllabus for various teacher education courses, laying down minimum qualifications for a person to be eligible for appointment as a teacher in class I-VIII, initiating the process of revision of the Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Teacher Education, development of strategies for training of untrained teachers, etc.

The reform initiatives have received positive response from the State Governments, Universities, examination Boards and other stakeholders.

Source: November 23, 2011/PIB

Admission of Poor in Private Schools

Section 12 (1) (c) of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act provides that Specified Category Schools and Unaided Private Schools shall admit in Class 1 to the extent of at least twenty-five per cent of the strength of that class, children belonging to weaker section and disadvantaged group in the neighborhood and provide free and compulsory elementary education till its completion.

The Government had on 23rd November, 2010 issued guidelines for implementing the provisions of section 12 (1) © and section 13 (1) of the RTE Act relating to procedure for admission in schools. It is the duty of the appropriate Government and local authority to ensure compliance of these guidelines by the schools. The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) and the State Commissions for Protection of Child Rights (SCPCR) have been entrusted with the responsibility to monitor the rights of the child under the RTE Act.

Source: November 23, 2011/PIB

Imparting Quality Education

The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009, which became operative with effect from 1st April, 2010 prescribes that Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR) in schools should be maintained as per the following: specifications:-

For first class to fifth class:

• Two teachers up to 60 admitted children

• Three teachers for 61 to 90 children

• Four teachers for 91 to 120 children

• Five teachers for 121 to 200 children

For sixth class to eighth class:

• At least one teacher per class so that there shall be at least one teacher each for (i) Science and Mathematics; (ii) Social Studies; and (iii) Languages

• At least one teacher for every 35 children;

• Where admission of children is above 100, there shall be (i) a full time head-teacher and (ii) part time instructors for Art Education, Health & Physical Education and Work Education.

• Five teachers plus one Head teacher if the number of admitted children is above 150; and the Pupil-Teacher Ratio (excluding Head-teachers) shall not exceed forty if the number of admitted children is above 200

As per the norms and standards prescribed under the RTE Act, school building shall have a barrier-free access and at least one class-room for every teacher and an office-cum-store-cum-Head teacher's room.

Imparting quality education is an ongoing process. A timeframe of three years (i.e. up to 31st March, 2013) has been mandated under the RTE Act, 2009 for provision of teachers as per the prescribed PTR. With a view to supporting States to improve the PTR, the norms for providing teachers under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) have been revised to correspond with the PTR mandated under the RTE Act, 2009. Till October, 2011, 19.14 lakh posts of teachers have been sanctioned under SSA, against which 12.01 lakh teachers have been recruited till 31.3.2011 by the State Governments/UTs.

Source: November 23, 2011/PIB

TATA Power helps conduct Education for Education in Nirsa Block

TATA Power's Joint Venture with Damodar Valley Corporation Maithon Power Limited is implementing the 1050 MW thermal power plant and is also supporting "Education Project" in 262 villages of Nirsa block in collaboration with PRATHAM (a renounced NGO in the area of education outreach).

This education project is being implemented by mobilizing 800 enthusiastic volunteers covering around 16400 children in the area. The teams of dedicated volunteers have contributed immensely, leading to the overwhelming success of the initiative. The volunteering program comprises of a four month duration course of 'Education for Education' and offers Digital literacy, Spoken English, Assistant teacher course (Language, Math, and English) covered in four modules and certified by Microsoft 'Technology at Work'. This volunteering program is currently running in 10

EFE centers, each facilitated by 1 Instructor (local entrepreneur) with 2 laptops. Total 200 volunteers have been enrolled for INTEL certified digital literacy course and is also recognized by NSDC (National Skill Development Corporation). 100 volunteers have successfully completed the course with 42 attaining 'A' grade in the exam covering four modules.

An event to honor the volunteers was organized at villages Madandih on 16th Nov'11, where 100 volunteers across all the villages of Nirsa block were by awarded Certificates in the presence of 30 cluster coordinators and EFE instructors.

Certificates were distributed by Project Director-Eastern Region Project- TATA Power, Mr Praveer Sinha and chairperson of MPL's R&R committee Mr Ashok Mandol accompanied by the other members and Officials of MPL. People from surrounding villages also joined in the program and applauded the effort of MPL in bringing education enhancement in the area.

In the program, successful volunteers expressed their gratitude and appreciation of the MPL's effort to provide them with a platform to make their dreams true.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr Praveer Sinha project director-eastern region projects said that " My heartiest congratulations to all volunteers for their achievement and assistance in furthering quality education for children in the Nirsa area. We are committed to improving the quality of life and bringing many more value added programs for children and youth."

Source: November 23, 2011/SAIL

Fewer takers for primary education in Gujarat

Despite consistent efforts by the state government to improve primary education in the state with events like 'Gunotsav' and 'Praveshotsav', the response is well below expectations.

According to figures given by the state government, Gujarat has 60 lakh students studying in 32,742 government schools, which is a vast reduction compared to a decade ago.

Since 1999-2000, there has been a tremendous fall in the number of students. In 1999, the state had 81.34 lakh primary students, which has fallen to 60 lakh this year - a drop of over 21 lakh.

Sharing more, Congress spokesperson Manish Doshi said, "There has been a decline in the number of students studying in classes VIII-XII. The Education Development Index (EDI) of Gujarat is quite low as compared to other major states of the country. In

2007-08, Gujarat stood 9th in terms of primary school education, and the position slipped to 13th in 2008-09."

According to the statistics from the director of primary education, in the year 1999-2000, there were a total of 81 lakh primary students in the state, of which 46 lakh were boys and 34 lakh, girls.

"However today, the state has around 60 lakh students studying primary education which is a tremendous reduction over the years," Doshi says. He questioned as to why the state is busy celebrating when there is such a worrying decline in primary education numbers. He said that villagers' children in particular are deprived of primary education.

In addition, the Congress has demanded that the state government declare model rules for the Right to Education (RTE) Act and also emphasise on the need to implement it effectively across the state.

Source: November 23, 2011/DNA India

A Kotecha contributes towards India's universities

Just inside the office of Pashmina Realty in Worli, there's an entire wall covered by a poster of LIFE, an NGO (non-governmental organisation) whose Mumbai chapter focusses mainly on health, education and low-cost housing under the Asit Kotecha Foundation. The poster is full of slogans written by Pashmina employees who participate actively in the NGO.

Behind the poster wall is the office of Asit Kotecha, who owns Pashmina Realty and is founder of ASK Group, a financial and portfolio management services firm that advises wealth to the tune of $1.5 billion. Kotecha is not a new convert to giving; he's been donating 10 percent of his profits to charity since the year his company was formed.

Asit and his younger brother Samir Kotecha founded ASK Group in 1983 to provide portfolio management and financial services and started giving away money to charity almost immediately, mainly in the areas of health and education. A large portion of the donation was routed through LIFE, which was managed by their cousins in Rajkot. Around 2005, they started the Mumbai chapter of LIFE under the Asit Kotecha Foundation. One of their biggest projects was the Habitat for Humanity, which provides housing for the poor.

But now Asit Kotecha is in the midst of his most ambitious giving project. A year ago, Kotecha donated Rs. 30 crore to the Mumbai University for building an international convention centre (ICC) at its Kalina campus and has now promised to bring in more funds as the cost of the centre has escalated to Rs. 200 crore.

"This amount is the biggest donation by any individual to any university in Maharashtra, if not India. Asit Kotecha has studied at Mumbai University. This donation will motivate some of the other alumni to come forward and participate in developing the university to achieve excellence and create a world class brand," says Rajan Welukar, Vice Chancellor of Mumbai University.

Kotecha always had an eye for inflection points. Over the past 30 years, sectors like cement, auto, banking and steel went through regulatory and management changes that some companies managed better than others. Kotecha had a knack for identifying these companies long before the market realised their potential.

He got into Madras Cements in the late 1980s when the industry was decontrolled. The company was largely ignored by the market even though it had cash profits of Rs. 6 crore and a capacity of 12 million tonnes a year, one of the largest in the country. Kotecha got into the stock at Rs. 300 a share in 1989 and exited at Rs. 5,000 in 1992. He made similar killings in many other sectors, including two-wheelers and banks. He got into two-wheelers in the mid-1990s before others realised its potential and into PSU (public sector undertaking) banks when interest rates started to fall in early 2000.

Even with giving, Kotecha's approach is pretty much the same. He's looking for opportunities that can become inflection points for society, especially in education and healthcare. He firmly believes that education has the power to change societies.

"These are the areas where we get to see the change happening in front of our eyes. When this change touches the life of many people, it has a huge effect on society. Just like we see return on investment in a company, we like to look at the change that is caused by giving back to the society. It is the best return one can have. Asit is clear that the convention centre can cause a huge impact on Mumbai," says Samir Kotecha who heads operations at ASK Group. His brother Asit is the strategist.

Indian promoters or CEOs have always preferred to give donations to universities abroad like Harvard or Stanford as they feel that Indian universities do not have the ability to utilise these funds well. Welukar wants to change all that and hopes Kotecha will become an example for other entrepreneurs.

When Kotecha first met Welukar in June 2010 at the university's Fort campus to donate Rs. 3 crore for a new philosophy building in Kalina, he realised that things were different and Welukar, just a month into his job, was driving the change.

Thirty minutes into their meeting, when Welukar mentioned his dream of building one of the biggest convention centres at the Kalina campus, it didn't take much time for Kotecha to agree to give Rs. 30 crore to the cause.

Universities across the world invest in convention centres as they help get international exposure and also attract talent. Welukar feels the ICC will create an environment conducive to innovation, research and learning as many international scientists and academic experts will come to the campus and inspire the students and faculty. Kotecha, on the other hand, looks at the impact on society when it comes to giving. He realised that the ICC was a landmark project with the potential to drive massive change.

For this project, the Kotechas have departed from their giving norms. Generally, they expect the beneficiary to contribute one-third of the project cost so that the owner gets a feeling of responsibility. But for the ICC, they overlooked this rule as the cost of the project is huge and there were multiple ways of getting it financed.

Another reason why the Kotechas are so keen on the ICC is that it will generate continuous funds for the Mumbai University as the convention centre will be free for at least four to six months in a year - when it's not being used for education purposes - and can be lent out to companies.

The Convention Centre

In spite of being the financial capital of the country, Mumbai does not have a convention centre that can host 5,000 people. There were plans to build one at BKC (Bandra-Kurla Complex) but it never saw the light of day. Hyderabad has the biggest convention centre in the country.

Organisations in Mumbai are forced to go to Delhi or Hyderabad to host large conventions, pushing up their costs dramatically. Delhi accounts for 29 percent of the share in the convention industry in India, while Mumbai accounts for 10 percent. Most of the conventions in Mumbai end up at JW Marriot, InterContinental The LaLiT or the Grand Hyatt, which cannot host more than 1,000 people at a time.

The Kalina campus is only 15 minutes away from the international airport, which makes it an ideal location for a convention centre. But what really works in favour of the plan is that India hosts numerous academic conferences and the ICC in Mumbai will easily be able to corner a large portion of the demand.

According to Feedback Ventures, globally, the convention centre industry is worth $106 billion and India is estimated to have a market size of $612 million, which will only expand in the future. Also, every rupee spent on the convention centre has the ability to give back Rs. 10 to the city by way of revenues and job generation.

When the project was initially discussed, the cost of building the ICC was pegged at about Rs. 50 crore. But after hiring Feedback Ventures as a consultant and some serious planning, the cost has gone up to Rs. 200 crore. There are seven architects fighting it out for getting their designs approved for the ICC. They will submit their designs this month (November 2011) and Kotecha will choose one and submit it to the university for approval.

Now, both the vice chancellor and Asit Kotecha are figuring out ways to fill the gap of almost Rs. 170 crore needed for the ICC. To begin with, they want some of the top business or political leaders who have studied in the university to come forward and make a donation.

Later, they want these corporate leaders to use their influence and get others to donate for the cause. There is also talk of initiating discussions with different banks to explain the importance of the ICC, so that they, in turn, can request their customers to make a donation. "Even if an individual is ready to give us Rs. 10,000 that will be great. It will be a completely mass funded convention centre and we can truly call it an amchi [our] Mumbai idea," Kotecha says.

His other idea is to finance it like a corporate project where the contribution will be considered as equity and the rest as debt. He ideally wants to go with a 1:2 debt-equity ratio where equity is the Rs. 60 crore he expects to collect through contributions and about Rs. 130 crore is the debt. According to his calculations, it will take around six years for the university to clear off the debt, based on the revenues generated by the ICC.

Right now Kotecha has donated Rs. 30 crore, but depending on contributions from others he is ready to put in more of his personal wealth into this project.

The third way of financing the gap is to create space for international organisations like the United Nations or educational institutions and do a long-term rent agreement in advance for nine years.

But Asit Kotecha feels that the best bet is really to go to the common man who has studied at the university and ask him for donations. Every year around six-and-a-half lakh students pass out of the university. He believes that all of them will contribute for a good cause.

Source: November 23, 2011/Ibn Live

They're opening up campuses in India

Will the world's top-rung institutes come to India once the foreign educational institutions law is in place, or will other universities be in a hurry to set up campuses in this country? As of now, institutes like the US's Duke, Canada's York and the UK's Middlesex are exploring options of opening up branches here.

Ranked 19 in the latest QS World University rankings, Duke University is already offering two executive MBA programmes that include week-long, intensive studies in India: the global executive MBA and the cross continent MBA programme.

"Duke University faculty members, based throughout the year in our home campus in Durham, North Carolina, accompany our students to study in India. Students get exposure to corporate visits and conversations with government officials related to the course of study," says John Gallagher, associate dean for executive MBA programmes at Duke University's Fuqua School of Business. Classes for the Duke Corporate Education course are conducted out of IIM-Ahmedabad.

One varsity that already has a campus in India is UK's Leeds Metropolitan University. The students enrolled in both India and the UK study the same curriculum. Those in Bhopal also have access to all the learning resources available in the UK, including access to the e-library and a rich pool of journal articles, case studies and academic papers.

"Even the examinations in both the UK and India campus are held on the same day and same time and students are assessed in a similar manner," says Abhishek Mohan Gupta, director - marketing & strategic development, Jagran Social Welfare Society (JSWS), Bhopal. Leeds Metropolitan University and JSWS had partnered to start offering the former's courses in India through the Leeds Met India, Bhopal campus. The faculty is from both India and the UK.

For students, "studying at Leeds Met has been an extraordinary experience where we got to see the best of both worlds. Interacting with people from different cultures, working and studying with them

has given me varied perspectives about things and has made me understand my environment better," says Hamza Chugtai, a third-year student of BA (hons) in business and management.

Canada's York University, ranked among the top 400 in the QS ranking, also promises to bring in quality international-level education. According to Dezsö J Horváth, dean, Schulich School of Business, York University, Toronto,

"We came up with the Schulich MBA in India programme in 2010 that is offered as part of a twinning arrangement with the SP Jain Institute of Management & Research in Mumbai and has been approved by the All India Council for Technical Education."

Officials at Schulich are planning a new campus in Hyderabad beginning 2013 with more international students and faculty and a transnational approach to management learning.

Talking about the fee, Horváth said: "When the institution opens the campus in Hyderabad, the programme will cost approximately C$30,000 per year and Hyderabad students will be eligible for scholarship and bursary support of up to C$10,000 per year," he added.

Middlesex University, UK, is also following suit. "Initially, there will be courses in IT, business and media, which will be of three years duration. The campus will be in partnership with an Indian institution, that will be responsible for all local clearances. The infrastructure will be world class and replicate the learning experience that is available in the UK in terms of quality," said Joe Victor, regional director, South Asia, Middlesex University.

Scotland's University of Strathclyde will come up with a campus in Greater Noida soon.

Source: November 23, 2011/Hindustan Times

Democratic Students' Organisation protests against anti-education bills

The Democratic Students' Organisation (DSO) staged a protest at Income Tax circle against the anti-education bills being presented in Parliament's winter session starting from Tuesday. The protest, attended mainly by students from different pockets of state, said that education would not only go beyond the reach of middle class students but corruption would prevail if the proposed bills are passed.

The secretary of the Gujarat chapter of the DSO, Bhavik Raja, said that if bills like Foreign Education Providers Bill, National Commission for Higher

Education and Research (NCHER) Bill and Education Tribunal Bill are passed, it will snatch away transparency in the education system.

"We protest against these bills formed on the guidelines of National Knowledge Commission. Sanctioning of these bills will allow foreign investment in education that will eventually make education expensive. In Educational Tribunal Bill, the plan is to recruit an IAS officer in place of retired judge and the NCHER committee will not get representation. This would encourage corruption," he said. The dharna in Ahmedabad was part of DSO's protest across India, he added.

Source: November 23, 2011/DNA India

Proposals to Provide Aakash Tablets to Students

The National Mission on Education through Information and Communication Technology (NMEICT) aims to leverage the potential of ICT in providing high-quality, personalized and interactive knowledge modules over the internet in any-time, any-where mode. To do so, a computing device that was low in cost but rich in features, was seen as an imperative. The low cost tablet PC 'Aakash' launched by Government will bring down the digital divide to a good extent.

In the XI Plan, under NMEICT, there is a provision for providing 50% subsidy to colleges and universities for procuring computing devices like 'Aakash' as per their requirements. The colleges and universities could then issue these devices to financially weak students from the library on the pattern of the Book Bank Scheme. Thus, the individual subsidy to poor students like SC, ST and OBC for buying Aakash tablets may not be needed.

Source: November 25, 2011/PIB

Pupil-Teacher Ratio

The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009, which became operative with effect from 1st April, 2010, prescribed that Pupil-Teacher Ratio (PTR) in schools should be maintained as per the following specified levels:

A. For classes 1 to V:

(i) Two teachers for upto sixty admitted children

(ii) Three teachers for 61-90 children

(iii) Four teachers for 91-120 children

(iv) Five teachers for 121-200 children

(v) One head Teacher, other than the five teachers, if the number of admitted children exceeds 150

and the PTR (excluding Head Teacher) shall not exceed forty if the number of admitted children is above 200.

B. (i) At least one teacher per class so that there shall be at least one teacher each for (a) Science and Mathematics: (b) Social Studies: and (c) Languages.

(ii) At least one teacher for every 35 children:

(iii) Where admission of children is above 100, there shall be (a) a full time head-teacher and (b) part time instructors for Art Education, Health & Physical Education and Work Education.

Since inception Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) in 2001-02, 19.14 lakh posts of teachers have been sanctioned till October, 2011. The PTR at National level has improved from 36 at Elementary level in 2005-06 to 33 and 31 at Primary and Upper Primary level respectively as per District Information System, for Education (DISE) n- 2009-10.

Source: November 25, 2011/PIB

U.S. official pursuing India education mission

Ann Stock, the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State, will travel to India November 26-December 2, 2011 to follow up on the U.S.-India Higher Education Summit, the U.S. Department of State announced.

Her engagements in India come in the wake of the October Summit, for which Indian Minister for Human Resources Development Kapil Sibal visited Washington.

Per a statement by the State Department Ms. Stock will visit New Delhi, Chandigarh and Chennai, where she will meet with government officials, students, and members of civil society.

At the culmination of the Higher Education Summit there were no 'big bang' announcements in terms of new agreements penned but at the time Mr. Sibal expressed confidence that it had set in motion the mechanisms for future exchanges that could lead to more U.S. investment into the vast vocational education space in India.

Source: November 26, 2011/The Hindu

IIITs give nod to single national-level entrance test

Indian Institutes of Information Technology (IIITs) have given its approval to the proposed single national-level entrance test for admission to undergraduate programme for science and engineering.

At a meeting of the directors of these premier institutes here on Monday, chaired by HRD minister

Kapil Sibal, a proposal to have a council for the IIITs was also accepted.

The proposal to hold a pan-India common entrance test, recommended by the T Ramasami Committee report, has already been accepted by the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) and the National Institutes of Technology (NITs).

The report recommends a mix of school and national level test performance for entry to undergraduate courses, thereby reducing multiplicity of entrance tests and over-dependency on coaching.

The Central Advisory Board of Education will take a final call before the single entrance test is put in place by 2013-14 academic session.

According to HRD ministry officials, a proposal to have a council of the IIIT on the lines of IIT and NIT council was also approved at Monday's meeting.

The council was helping the IIITs plan their research activity, academic and other issues in a much more focused way, the officials said.

Other issues including bringing pay parity and other administrative matters were also discussed at the meeting, the officials said.

Source: November 28, 2011/Times of India

Government accepts GMAT to globalize business education

Indian business schools have been allowed to admit students on the basis of the globally recognized graduate management aptitude test (GMAT), a move that will help these schools attract more overseas aspirants.

Fewer than 4,000 foreign students are currently getting enrolled across all disciplines of higher education in India every year, according to the government data. But business schools in particular are keen to increase the number to make classrooms more diverse, improve their global rankings and gain international accreditations.

The 13 Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs), the country's best-known business schools, recently decided to hold roadshows to attract foreign students. In the first week of November, the HRD ministry also gave them formal permission to improve their brand image internationally so that more foreign students join them.

Being able to admit students on the basis of GMAT, which is recognized in more than 110 countries, will now make it easier for India's 3,000-plus

business schools to draw international students, education officials and experts said.

"We all know the credibility of GMAT," said H. Chaturvedi, director of the Greater Noida-based Birla Institute of Management and Technology. "Our schools' diversity index is poor, and this works as a stumbling block whenever we apply for international accreditation. This will now be taken care of."

The decision is part of the HRD ministry-controlled regulator All India Council for Technical Education's (AICTE) efforts to simplify the admission process for business schools.

Various business schools earlier used to carry out their own tests, making the process opaque. This year AICTE announced to prohibit the practice, and asked all business schools to select students on the basis of the common admission test (CAT) conducted by the IIMs; management aptitude test conducted by the All India Management Association; Xavier Aptitude Test conducted by XLRI, Jamshedpur; the joint management entrance test (JMET) conducted by the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs); and a national test conducted by the AICTE.

The IITs scrapped JMET in August and decided to use CAT as their basis for admission to management courses.

"Since JMET has been discontinued, the same shall be replaced by GMAT," reads a revised notification on the AICTE website.

The Graduate Management Aptitude Council, which conducts GMAT, welcomed the step. "The government accepting us as one of the exams for admitting students in recognized business schools in India will help the sector get foreign students. This is a sweet crucial step in the direction of internationalising management colleges," said Ashish Bhardwaj, the council's regional director for South Asia.

He said the council gave a presentation to AICTE on the merits of GMAT. "Now, one door has opened and here it depends on Indian B-schools on how much they position themselves as effective brands. Singapore and Hong Kong have positioned them as great destinations, similarly, India needs to collectively position itself as an education destination."

Bhardwaj said he expects African, West Asian and South Asian students will soon show interest in Indian business schools, "Our job is to connect students with opportunities," he said, adding that

the council won't tweak the examination format to suit Indian candidates.

Source: November 30, 2011/Live Mint

UK university launches $400,000 scholarships for Indians

One of UK's research-intensive universities, Queen's University Belfast, has launched scholarships for Indian engineering and science students worth up to 400,000 USD.

The scheme, open to 100 talented Indian students who wish to enrol in a postgraduate engineering or science programme at Queen's University in 2012, will be entitled to the A P J Abdul Kalam Scholarship.

Launching the scholarships on a visit to the Bangalore headquarters of Infosys Limited, Queen's University Vice-Chancellor, Professor, Sir Peter Gregson said: "Not only will 100 top Indian students have the opportunity to receive one of the prestigious scholarships, they will also have the benefit of studying at one of UK's leading science and engineering universities. This will further enhance their skills and allow them to make a significant contribution to the economic development of India."

Queen's University, Belfast is a member of the Russell Group of the UK's 20 leading research-intensive universities. The Chancellor of Queen's University, Kamalesh Sharma, is Secretary General of the Commonwealth and a former Indian High Commissioner to the UK. The University has invested over 500,000,000 USD over the last 10 years in creating one of the most modern and dynamic campuses in the UK.

Dr Kalam, on his visit to the university in 2009, was awarded an Honorary Doctorate that recognised his contribution to science, engineering and public service in India.

"Queens has an established and proud history of working closely with the industry and is now partnering some of the finest research institutions and universities in India. The sharing of knowledge and skills across international borders is vital in today's world and I am confident that the Dr Kalam Scholarships will have rewarding outcomes which are beneficial to both India and Northern Ireland," he added.

Engineering at Queen's University was ranked in the top 10 in the UK in the most recent Research Assessment Exercise 2008, which identified areas of world-class research across all of its engineering disciplines. This excellent outcome reinforced

Queen's position as a University leading the way in areas central to society's future.

Queen's University Belfast is the current holder of the UK Times Higher Education Outstanding Engineering Research Team of the Year. The award recognises the team's work in tackling the world's worst case of on-going mass poisoning and creating the first low-cost chemical free arsenic removal plant in India.

Source: November 30, 2011/Deccan Herald

Educationally Backward Areas

The Government of India has identified 374 Educationally Backward Districts (EBDs) having Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) lower than the national GER for higher education. Similarly, 3500 Educationally Backward Blocks (EBBs) have been identified in the country.

3500 Model Schools have been approved in all Educationally Backward Blocks (EBBs) on Kendriya Vidyalaya (KV) template, through State/UT Governments. The outlay for Model Schools Scheme during the 11th Five Year Plan is Rs. 12,750 crore and the estimated central share for setting up of 3,500 schools in EBBs is Rs. 9,935 crore. Funds are released to the States and UTs based on viable proposals received from them.

Under a new Centrally Sponsored Scheme, there is a provision for establishing one Model Degree College in each of the 374 identified districts. A total of 142 proposals have been received by the University Grants Commission (UGC), out of which 78 have been approved. An amount of Rs. 19.95 crore and Rs. 17.29 crore have been released for the year 2010-11 and 2011-12 respectively.

Source: November 30, 2011/PIB

Rs 3,000 cr investment for new Pharma institutes

The Department of Pharmaceuticals has envisaged an investment Rs 3,000 crore to set up ten more National Institute of Pharmaceutical Education and Research (NIPER) over the next five years in to enhance availability of skilled human resources in the pharma sector.

The proposal to set up ten additional NIPERs is one of the many proposals, worth Rs 12,280 crore, that have been submitted to the Planning Commission by the Department of Pharmaceuticals (DoP) under the 12th Five Year Plan.

"One of the proposals is to set up ten more NIPERs. We have submitted the proposals to the Planning Commission. Now, how many proposals are

accepted is their take," Department of Pharmaceuticals Joint Secretary Devendra Chaudhry told PTI.

DoP intends to invest Rs 3,000 crore to set up the ten NIPERS and the locations for the same would be finalised only after the acceptance of proposals by Planning Commission, Chaudhry said.

The government has already set up six NIPERs at Patna, Hyderabad, Ahmedabad, Rae Bareli, Guwahati and Kolkata.

Commenting on the proposals submitted to the Planning Commission, Chaudhry said "these will help to strengthen industry, human resources, R&D, regulatory organisations and also to strengthen DoP,".

Giving details of the plan, he said part of the amount would be given as loans to the small and medium enterprises to help them achieve standards of various regulators, including the US Food and Drug Administration (USFDA).

"Some of the amount would also be utilised to help Indian companies to develop products for export markets," he said.

The DoP has also proposed to invest Rs 200 crore over the next five years to strengthen the 'Jan Aushadhi' scheme. As part of the campaign, the department would spread awareness regarding the usage of unbranded drugs, Chaudhry added.

Cheaper unbranded generic medicines have been made available through Jan Aushadhi stores. Currently, 107, such stores have been opened in various states in the country.

The department has also proposed to set up Good Laboratory Practices (GLP) compliant chemical, biological laboratories and large animal facilities in Public Private Partnership mode.

"In all this, industry needs to come out strongly and equitably for participation," Chaudhry said.

Source: November 30, 2011/Business Standard

Financial Assistance to SC/ST Students

The University Grants Commission (UGC) provides financial assistance to Central/State/UGC maintained deemed to be universities and colleges for SC/ST students under following three schemes:-

(1) Remedial Coaching at Undergraduate and Postgraduate Level for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Minority Communities Students.

(2) Coaching for entry into services for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Minority Communities Students.

(3) Coaching of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Minority Communities candidates to prepare for National Eligibility Test (NET)/State Level Eligibility Test (SLET).

Universities and Colleges covered under Section 2(f) and 12 (B) of the UGC Act, with students belonging to SC/ST/OBC (non creamy layer)/Minority communities are considered for financial assistance on lump sum basis by UGC under these schemes. An amount of Rs. 48.45 crores was spent in XIth Plan on these schemes. Besides, UGC provides fellowship to SC/ST students under the Scheme of Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship (RGNF) since 2005. Under RGNF, 2000 slots for SC and 667 slots for ST students are filled every year.

Source: November 30, 2011/PIB

Technology: educational divider or equalizer?

"I don't know any vets in my city, so talking to my mentor is very helpful," Sadie says." We talk about everything – what courses I should take in high school to become a vet, how she became a vet, why she got interested in the career."

Sadie is part of a program called DreamCatcher Mentoring, which since 2005 has matched 700 students in Canada's North with mentors in the South in a bid to keep kids engaged with their studies.

The program is considered a success. In Whitehorse, 41 per cent of high-school students won't graduate, but for kids involved in the program, only six per cent drop out.

And taking part doesn't require the latest in high technology, like smart boards or iPads. All that is needed is the ability to e-mail – with a simple computer and an Internet connection.

How much technology should be in the classroom is one of the most hotly debated issues in education. The latest gadgets can be out of reach for low-income families, but those in favour say it's the responsibility of schools to provide a digital education, which is necessary for an emerging work force. As teachers weigh the pros and cons of pricey hi-fi educational tools, the question becomes whether technology will be the divider or the equalizer for Canadian students.

Statistics Canada does not track children's access to technology at home, but there is anecdotal evidence and growing concern in education over a phenomenon known as the "app gap." It's based on

studies, mostly out of the United States, that found that low-income families are less likely to own a computer, download educational apps, and more likely to stick a television in their child's bedroom.

It's a "stumbling block to what's being described as the bring-your-own-device model of using digital tools in the classroom," says Matthew Johnson, educational director at the Media Awareness Network, a non-profit Canadian group advocating for digital literacy.

It's not just remote communities in the North who don't have access to technology. Mr. Johnson says similar trends exist in urban zones, in particular low-income neighbourhoods where infrastructure for high-speed Internet isn't an issue.

Valerie Steeves, a researcher at the University of Ottawa, has been running focus groups with teachers across the country on technology in the classroom for the Media Awareness Network.

"We asked our teachers if they assigned homework that would require their students to use technology, and many of them said 'absolutely not, it's an equity issue,' " she says. "They said that given the fact you can't just assume that all your students have the same amount of access, that it's important as teachers they take [that] into consideration when assigning work outside of the class."

But an innovative project in India suggests that it doesn't take many resources to bridge the digital divide.

The Hole in the Wall project has mounted computers in the walls of slums across the developing world. The experiment makes a compelling argument for an if-you-build-it-they-will-come approach to technology.

"It means simply that if you give the access to a [computer, children] will do the same thing ... They will pick up computing skills on their own, they will pick up English, improve in mathematics. They start Googling [and] using search engines," says Ritu Dangwal, a university professor involved with the project.

Recently, the project mounted a computer with programs on biotechnology in a remote, poor fishing village in southern India that had been affected by the 2005 tsunami.

None of the children spoke English, but when researchers came back to the village several months later, they had taught themselves complex subjects like how genes were passed on by heredity and were scoring 40 per cent in their understanding of English and biotechnology.

In Yukon, the Department of Education has embraced basic technology and brought Wi-Fi to every school and community centre as a means of closing the geographical and access gaps for its students. The government has also provided funding to DreamCatcher Mentoring and is looking at video conferencing to help improve access to education in remote communities.

"We believe that technology is going to be the thing that levels the playing field for our kids," says Christie Whitley, Yukon's assistant deputy minister of education. "The Internet gives them access to the world."

For Sadie, just e-mailing with her mentor is helping."[DCM] and my mentor have given me an insight I don't think I would have otherwise," she says.

Josh Silvertown, the founder of DreamCatcher Mentoring, believes some technology can be the answer to the territory's educational challenges, like the high drop-out rate.

"If you can't have that face time, at least you are still getting some contact through e-mail. It's definitely opening up access for these kids," Mr. Silvertown says.

Source: November 30, 2011/The Globe and Mail

The new visa rules encourage quality students

What changes has the UK implemented with respect to student visas, which are called Tier 4 visas?

The first set of changes include alterations to English language provisions for students, tougher accreditation and inspection requirements for all sponsors and tighter restrictions on the ability of students to work and bring in dependants. These policies were introduced between April and June 2011. The reforms to UK student visas are being introduced in phases so that students and education providers can adapt to them more easily.

Please elaborate on the changes.

In terms of English language, if students intend to study at the degree level or above, at a higher education institution (HEI), they will need to be adept in the language as per the B2 intermediate level of proficiency defined by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Those who want to study at the high school level must be competent in English to a minimum of B1 CEFR. Students need to pass these tests before they are issued a confirmation of acceptance. The

second change concerns tougher inspection requirements for all sponsors, which means that only good education providers will be able to sponsor international students. Plus, there are tighter restrictions on the ability of students to work and bring their dependants. Students with a Tier 4 General visa, studying at degree level/at an HEI can work 20 hours per week during term time and full-time in the holidays. If studying at a publicly funded further education college, students may work 10 hours per week during term time and full-time in the holidays. Students pursuing a postgraduate degree, for at least 12 months at an HIE and government-sponsored students on courses of longer than six months may bring their dependants.

Why have the student visa rules been made so much more stringent?

These changes aim to stop abuse of the student visa process by those students who are motivated only to work and not study, as well as by education providers who have not been meeting the standard of education that international students deserve and have paid for. The changes are not about preventing high quality students from applying to the UK's first class education providers. In fact, the new visa rules have been put in place to support good institutions and the good students.

Has the number of student visa applicants decreased this year?

India has long been one of the top source countries of students who wish to study in the UK. The numbers of student visas issued in India in recent years are approximated as 27,000 students in 2008, which increased to 57,000 in 2009. The year 2010 saw a dip with 41,500 Indian students visiting the UK. This year's figures are not yet available, though we expect to see a decline in the number of visas applied for in 2011 because of the tightening of visa rules, and being in a transition period for their implementation.

How can students verify the authenticity of the institutes they are applying to? Students need to do their homework and investigate the credibility of prospective education providers and the courses on offer to ensure that they select one that is right for them. They should directly contact institutes and make use of the information about education in the UK from the British Council in India. The UK Border Agency publishes a list of registered education sponsors on its website, including those who have attained 'Highly Trusted Sponsor' status. This is to help students select an authentic education provider.

Students should ensure that their chosen institute is on this register before they apply.

Will there be further changes in 2012?

Another set of changes will be introduced in April 2012. This will include restrictions on work placements, but not for HIE students. Students will be permitted to study for a maximum of five years above degree level, but there will be exceptions to this rule. While the post-study route will close in April, there will still be opportunities for students to stay on to work in the UK. Students graduating with a degree from a listed institute will be able to apply for a job with a UK Border Agency licensed Tier 2 sponsor. Students will only be able to switch to Tier 2 (skilled workers with an offer of employment) if they are in the UK before their visa expires. They must be paid the minimum salary, ie £20,000 per annum or the minimum set out in the relevant code of practice.

Moreover, the UK Border Agency has also published its first list of financial institutions from which it will not accept documentation in support of Tier 4 visa applications.

The reason for this is that the agency needs to be able to verify that students have the necessary funds to support themselves.

The list for India will come into force for applications submitted after November 24. It is important that students make alternative arrangements if they currently bank with one of these institutions.

Source: November 29, 2011/Hindustan Times

Want to study at a Meta University?

If you are a geek in a tech-school with a burning passion for the arts, you won't at the moment be able to explore the technological and creative worlds together.

However, there's a chance that in about a year's time you could be taking up diametrically-opposite academic streams at the same time. The government proposes to create a Meta University (MU) to enable cross-disciplinary learning that produces more rounded intellectuals and triggers innovation.

In many Western universities, students have the freedom to graduate in diverse disciplines together – physics and international relations, for example. If all goes well in implementing the proposal, MU will facilitate something similar yet quite different.

The proposed university has been so named (Meta is Greek for "going beyond") as it will "go beyond the conventional boundaries". There will be a

network of institutions to allow a student at, say, a scientific institution in Bangalore to enroll for a history course at a liberal arts institution in New Delhi. The arrangement is expected to include face-to-face interaction and involve mentors for students.

"It's all about enlarging the choices of the student," says R Gopalakrishnan, member secretary, National Innovation Council (NInC), which has piloted the move. The government has declared 2010-2020 as India's decade of innovation.

The intent behind MU is to train "people who combine the left brain attributes (analytical and logical) with right brain attributes (thoughtful and subjective) because these minds are most conducive to innovation," elaborates Gopalakrishnan.

Students will be able to take full degrees from the university as long as they fulfil all credit requirements.

Would working people and those who are not regular students be able to benefit from it? No, there are open and distance learning courses available to them, says the official.

The first session is slated for a June 2012 launch. At least 1,000 professionals are expected to graduate from MU by 2014.

While the ministry of human resource development is to take the proposal forward by calling a meeting with universities representatives, admission and other details will have to be worked out by the academia.

The multi-disciplinary, trans-institutional model could materialise by using the National Knowledge Network, which has so far connected 440 out of a targeted 1500 universities through a high speed (multi gigabit) fibre-based, broadband network.

"Though the internet and technology are fundamental to this conception of the Meta University, at the crux is not a new technology but a 'new pedagogy' that is more in tune with the requirements of the knowledge society of the twenty-first century," says NInC's Report to the People 2011. "In such an environment there is a greater focus on moving from the chalk and talk model with the teacher at the centre, to a learner-centric, collaborative model that allows continuous learning from the environment. The web/ internet, therefore, provides both a platform for communication and collaborations as well as a source of content."

Changing Paradigms

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• The intent behind MU is to train people who combine the left brain attributes (analytical and logical) with right brain attributes (thoughtful and subjective) because these minds are most conducive to innovation

Source: November 29, 2011/Hindustan Times

Gain easy access to education

The open and distance education (ODE) system was introduced in India primarily to meet the aspirations of the young generation of our country. With more than 500 universities and around 30,000 colleges, India at present has the world's second largest education system. However, a large section of society remains deprived of higher education.

It is painful to realise that only about 12% of 18- to 23-year-olds participate in higher education in our country while the corresponding world average is 23%.

Experts hold that an enrolment ratio of 20% in higher education is a minimum requirement for economic development in the modern world.

In such a scenario, distance-mode courses have opened up a new path to build, nurture and sustain a strong base of a value-added educational system in the country.

Distance-education courses are convenient in many ways. They are very cost effective and flexible. For example, you can get an MBA degree by studying at home. You may appear for an online exam after studying at home. You also have an opportunity to pursue your studies simultaneously with a career. Now a PhD can also be completed from an open university.

There are at present 14 open universities in India - one national and 13 state-level. They provide an opportunity for the development of your talent and innovative skills. In India, about 24% of all enrolees in higher education study through the distance-mode while the plan is to increase this number to 40% by 2012.

However, one prejudice that unfortunately exists in some sections of our society is that credentials obtained from open universities are less valuable those from conventional institutions. This is not true at all. One should rather appreciate the fact that this mode of learning has been established to

empower learners to study at their own convenience - "Anyone, Anywhere and Anytime," the 3As are the main philosophy behind ODE.

Courses offered by open universities have a different outlook in the sense that the process of imparting education in open universities is focused on learner-centric flexibility in which the student plays a pivotal role. Of late the structure of ODE courses has also been upgraded to incorporate pure and applied knowledge that takes care of skill-based competencies relevant to society and the nation. Together with this, a host of vocational courses are available and more are being added to promote employability.

Various open universities like Indira Gandhi National Open University at the all-India level and UP Rajarshi Tandon Open University and others at the state level offer hundreds of courses. You can pick from undergraduate, postgraduate, diploma, certificate and doctoral programmes. The popular ones include BA, BCom, BSc, BCA, BLib, BEd and bachelor of information technology (BIT). For masters', the MBA course is quite a favourite. Many popular vocational courses include diplomas/certificates in nursery teacher training, costume design and fashion technology, medical lab techniques, journalism, tourism studies, office assistantship, textile designing, fashion designing, yoga, entrepreneurship, photography, automobile technology, child care and education, electrical equipment repairing, interior design, food quality control, criminology and forensic science, advertising, disaster management etc.

The ODE system in India has come a long way in the past 30 years and its impact is being felt all over. However, there is still a long way to go in ensuring high quality. While a lot of effort is being put into improving the quality of the study material, steps are also being taken at the national level on enhancing the quality through its integration with Information and Communication Technology (ICT). ICT, if used creatively, can make a big difference in the way ODE courses are conducted and help students acquire 21st-century skills and abilities such as digital literacy, innovative thinking, creativity, sound reasoning and effective communication. The National Mission on Education through ICT, launched in 2009, is a major government initiative to leverage the potential of ICT in providing high-quality multimedia-enriched personalised and interactive content, free of cost, to all learners in higher education institutions in the anytime-anywhere mode.

Multi-media enrichment helps communicate difficult concepts in simpler ways and thus, offers unique advantages in education. For instance, text alone does not allow you to get a "feel" of Shakespeare's plays while a zoology teacher cannot make a killer whale come alive in a classroom. Multi-media enables us to provide a way by which you can experience your subject in a profound way.

The future of ODE in India looks very promising and the day is not very far off when students will come to this system by choice and not by compulsion.

Source: November 29, 2011/Hindustan Times

Slowdown hits construction, IT, pharma courses

Not just economy, higher technical education is facing an unprecedented slowdown in once most sought-after courses in information technology (IT), construction and pharmacy. Technical education regulator, the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) has received applications for closure of IT, construction and pharma courses whereas there is demand for opening new courses in conventional education streams such as mechanical and civil engineering.

Around one-fourth of 4,000 institutes in India running IT courses and one-third of 1,200 colleges running construction courses want these courses to the closed. Of about 1,430 pharmacy colleges, about 200 institutes have asked AICTE to shut down some unpopular courses.

"Many of these courses were started on basis of perception rather than scientific data linked with future job market," AICTE chairperson SS Mantha said. "There is no linkage between starting a college and demand in the job market. This has resulted in skewed growth in certain sectors of technical education."

The number of technical education institutes doubled since 2005-06 when India's economy showed an impressive growth rate of over 8% with their number being 12,814 in 2011. Institutes opened up in nook and corner of the country and AICTE gave approvals without even checking infrastructure and quality.

The maximum jump was witnessed in IT, management and engineering, which has most of six million students in technical education in India, but now its time for slowdown. In 2011, the number of seats vacant in IT courses was around 40 % and around 30 % in pharmacy.

Such has been the situation that five states - Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Haryana

and Chhattisgarh - have asked the AICTE not to approve any new courses or institutes in their states. Maharashtra and Punjab wants no more engineering colleges.

"We are not able to recover even the faculty cost," was comment of a director of engineering course in Punjab, who has sought the AICTE approval to close down the institute.

Source: November 29, 2011/Hindustan Times

IIT to train edu chiefs in mgmt, leadership

While the education department is all set to implement several important policies like the Right to Education (RTE), the eight directors of education from primary to secondary will receive lessons in strategic management and leadership skills, from the Indian Institute of Management in Lucknow, announced a senior education official.

One of the biggest departments in the state administration, the education department, is geared up to introduce a lot of important policies this year from the improving the standards of Kasturi Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas, to conducting activity-based learning in the city.

Now, to turn its heads into better leaders, they will be taught to tackle problems and become effective managers and leaders.

"Such programmes will be extremely useful for the directors of education. Today, our department is one of the biggest and we need to bring in efficiency. With the department taking on important projects, we need the directors to don the roles of leaders," said V Radha, director of the Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyaan.

The state government has recently formed a taskforce for the implementation of the RTE. Secretaries from all the departments of education are members of the taskforce.
"Co ordination with other departments is going to be crucial in implementing RTE," Radha said.

Source: November 30, 2011/DNA India

Pakistan may take leaf out of CBSE book

India's education reforms may serve as a blueprint for the sub-continent. The CBSE's ambitious new system of Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE), in place of a single-board exam, is gathering steam not just in India, but in neighbouring countries like Pakistan and Bhutan, too.

Vineet Joshi, chairman of the CBSE board, has already sent a presentation on the CCE to Bhutan and is in the process of sending it to the Aga Khan University Examination Board in Pakistan. "I think this is a very welcome move for students in these countries. I have a feeling that the situation in these countries vis-a-vis education is very similar to our country. India's experiences with the new system of continuous and comprehensive evaluation will be useful to countries like Pakistan," Joshi says.

During a meeting of the Council of Boards of School Education in Delhi last week, not only were representatives of Indian boards in attendance, but a senior civil servant from Islamabad, Ramzan Achakzai, was present, too. Achakzai is the secretary of the Inter Board Committee of Chairmen, comprising the heads of all national and provincial educational boards in Pakistan.

Not only is Achakzai impressed with the new system, but he even plans to present a paper on it back home in Pakistan, in a bid to impress the Pakistani establishment about its benefits. He will discuss the new system with heads of education boards and textbook committees in Pakistan, as well as with the government.

"CCE involves a very dynamic and interactive education system, where students are not simply passive learners but actively participate in the system. This will provide a good opportunity to maximize learning levels. This will also enhance the knowledge levels of teachers and help them figure out their own deficiencies," says Achakzai.

In Pakistan, like in India, Achakzai believes that the board examination system, which involves assessing a student based on a single exam at the end of the year, only tests a student's memory and ability to learn by rote. He believes that with the present system, teachers are in such a hurry to finish the syllabus that they are left with little time for other activities, such as the overall development of the child.

"CCE does not simply cover the subject matter but also focuses on co-curricular activities and helps build the character of the child and creates good citizens," feels Achakzai.

While he is clearly in favour of CCE, he hastens to add that this system has its share of drawbacks. For starters, he says it depends heavily on the credibility of the teacher. The CCE system involves school teachers assessing children on many parameters throughout the year. Achakzai's concerns mirror those of several students and educationists in India, who feel that it is important for teachers to be impartial during their assessment.

Ramzan Achakzai, a senior civil servant from Islamabad, plans to present a paper on Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation in Pakistan. He will discuss the new system with heads of education boards and textbook committees in Pakistan, as well as with the government.

Source: November 30, 2011/The Times of India

ANALYSIS/OPINION/INNOVATIVE PRACTICE

Foreign varsities can make Indian education job-oriented

As India and Scotland forge new ties in education, Scottish education experts say foreign varsities can not only fill the huge demand-supply gap in this field but also help make education more job-oriented in the country.

On a visit to India, Scottish Education Secretary Michael Russell told IANS, "There are similarities in the system of education in India and Scotland. "We have over 4,000 Indian students in Scotland and a strong alumni base here. We cannot go everywhere. So we have to choose," the Scottish MP said.

"Indian students are successful at research and India has enormous challenges as a country in the field of education," he added. According to Scottish government officials, some 20 varsities from Scotland are in collaboration with Indian institutes. Russell gave the inaugural address at the first overseas campus of the Scottish University of Strathclyde at Greater Noida near Delhi.

The education secretary was also present at the signing of a pact between Scotland's Edinburgh Napier University and Sikkim Manipal University of India. Dame Joan K. Stringer, vice chancellor of Scotland's premier Edinburgh Napier University, said India was one of the most dynamic economies to tie up with. "India is one of the world's largest and most dynamic economies and we are delighted to celebrate our partnership".

The Scottish educationist said the gap in demand and supply in the field of education in India was a major challenge.

Source: November 17, 2011/ IANS/Economic Times

NIIT pioneered IT education in India

Set up in 1981 by Rajendra S Pawar , Vijay K Thadani and P Rajendran, with investment from HCL Technologies' founder Shiv Nadar, NIIT has since trained legions of graduates, creating a pipeline of skilled workforce for the IT industry and has a presence in over 40 countries. In 2004, it was split into two companies, one focusing on IT education and training and the other on IT solutions. In conversation with Radhika P Nair, Pawar, NIIT's co-founder and chairman, shares his entrepreneurial philosophy.

Spot the Problem

I was working as Head of corporate planning at HCL in the early eighties and was tying up processes together. While doing that I realised that lack of trained manpower had the potential of holding back the then nascent IT industry. Bringing people and computers together was the challenge. This was the genesis of NIIT. Entrepreneurs have to be problem seekers, spotting the problem before anyone else.

Organisation Building

We never had any doubts or nightmares about our idea. We were very excited about it. But it is one thing to be excited and quite another to build up the company. We devoted time and effort to build the organisation, as scaling up is linked to the strength of the organisation. The most crucial part of building up a company is getting the right people. It is not enough to get the person with the right qualifications; he should also have the right frame of mind that fits in with what is required for the company.

People Power

We try to nurture talent. We have had an annual day at NIIT every year for the past 22 years. We pick a central theme each year for the coming year. Last year it was 'Employee First' and we went back to study the young NIIT-ian and this year we have instituted the Young Achiever award. I have started meeting the younger generation of NIIT employees more regularly to understand their views better. I am quite proud that at NIIT we have created an environment where people are willing to try out new ideas to solve issues.

Pet Projects

Now, I have the luxury of being involved in many projects. At the moment I am focusing on Bhutan's IT literacy programme with which NIIT is associated. It was interesting to see King Jigme Khesar Namgyal Wangchuck and senior government officials going back to the classroom to understand the role of technology in improving people's lives. The other project is NIIT University, which is in Neemrana on the outskirts of Delhi. It should be fully functional by 2020 and I hope it becomes a sustainable, research-driven centre for higher education. As entrepreneurs, we need to keep finding new problems to solve.

Source: November 18, 2011/Economic Times

We need to educate students with high level of competence

Winning an award brings with it the added responsibility to prove one's worth. And Prof. Sriram Ramaswamy, of the Centre for Condensed Matter Theory, Department of Physics, Indian Institute of Science promises to deliver much more after he was conferred with the Infosys Prize 2011 (Physical Science category). He is the lone Bangalorean and one among six to get this prestigious award for his theoretical research on various aspects of the collective movement of self-propelled particles as a model for living systems ranging from bacteria to schools of fish in the ocean. The prize is among the highest in terms of prize money (Rs 50 lakh), the amount meant to recognize the researcher's contribution in the field of Science. The Infosys Prize, instituted in 2009, is given from a corpus of Rs 100 crore contributed by the trustees and Infosys Technologies. The jury consists of luminaries like Amartya Sen, among others.

He talks about Science, its future and scope, cutting-edge subjects in Physics and quality of faculty. Excerpts:

What's the state of Physics in India? How do you compare the system here vis-a-vis foreign universities?

It's no different from the state of general education in the country. As with most questions about our country, the answer depends on where you look. The places generally considered the best are like that because they have been given resources and freedom, both academic and administrative. Many excellent institutions have come up in India in recent years but their number remains inadequate for the country with such an enormous population. The shortage at the moment is not primarily one of funds. As regards universities abroad, most countries in the West have managed to sustain a strong tradition of research primarily in the universities, with all disciplines represented in a balanced manner, quite different from the model of a research institute specializing in a few areas.

How do students today respond to Physical Sciences? Has interest in Pure Sciences waned?

This too is variable across the country and from institution to institution. At IISc, we still get students of very high quality. Also, I think the Pure/ Applied and Science/ Engineering distinctions are no longer very useful. The important question is: how many students choose a career in research? What we need to do is to educate enough people for a high level of competence. We still have a good number who decide to pursue research.

What is your research all about?

My students, colleagues and I were interested in the laws governing organized groups of organisms swimming through a fluid. Inspired by earlier work from groups at Oregon and IBM, we used the physicist's approach to studying orderly arrangements of molecules, but took into account the fact that the "molecules", i.e. the organisms moved under their own power and disturbed the fluid. Interestingly, researchers in Paris, a couple of years after our work, came up with equations identical to ours, but as a description of what goes on with the structures inside one cell. I also work on problems in non-biological physics, including how liquids turn to glass, and the thermalization of quantum systems.

What's the scope of Physics and the Physical Sciences in urban and rural India?

I'm not qualified to comment on rural India. After high school, students choose to go to engineering or applied science because the job opportunities are there. A Science graduate with a 3-year degree is less likely to find a job than a person with a 4-year Engineering degree. I think we need a single (probably 4-year) degree at the end of which a student is equipped equally for a technology job or for research and a PhD. This would erase the unnecessary distinction between Science and Engineering. In a broader context, and for the longer run, we must aim to educate most students in universities where all disciplines - humanities, social sciences, the natural sciences, technology, medicine -- with research and education, both postgraduate and undergraduate, are pursued side by side. The University of Hyderabad, is an encouraging example in this regard.

Source: November 20, 2011/Times of India

Problems force shift in govt's higher education plan

The UPA government will shift its focus from quantity to quality in higher education with its efforts to launch an unprecedented expansion across the country not being matched by building of infrastructure and finding talented teachers. The government had announced the setting up of 51 public-funded higher education institutions – including eight Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) and seven Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs) during the 11th Five Year Plan period from 2007-2012.

But all these plans have not been implemented. Most of the proposed institutions have been plagued by various deficiencies, even threatening their brand equity. They have failed to take off primarily because of delays in land acquisition and disputes between the Centre and the states on where they should be set up.

Given the setback to these new institutions, the 12th plan (2012-17) will go slow in adding more institutions. "Ensuring quality in higher education to compete with the global best would be the objective in the 12th plan and not opening a number of new institutes," said an HRD ministry official.

The 12th plan will add four new IITs but no new IIMs. Fourteen innovation universities and 374 model colleges already announced in the 11th plan but could not be established will also go into the new plan.

Despite the union cabinet approving over R10,000 crore for setting up new IITs and IIMs in 2008, construction work for only four technology and five management institutes have started and about 40% of the faculty posts are lying vacant.

"There were huge delays in land acquisition by the state governments," a ministry official explained, giving the example of IIM-Rohtak, where part of the land was claimed by the Haryana Police. There has also been no decision where the central university in Bihar should come up as the state government has been insisting on a campus in the educationally backward Motihari district, which is not acceptable to the ministry.

In the next few years, the ministry plans huge investments to set up IITs, IIMs and 16 new central universities with international quality research facilities and faculties. "IIT-Bhubaneswar should have the same level of excellence as IIT-Bombay or Delhi," a ministry official said.

Faculty shortage ranges from 30% to 40% in IITs and up to 30% in IIMs. It is as high as 50% of the teaching posts in the university system. "Many new universities have started from temporary campuses with just a few courses because of faculty shortage and space," a senior UGC official said.

The Road Blocks

• Faculty Shortage: 50% shortage in Universities; 30-40% shortage in IIMs and IITs

• Land: Delay in acquiring lad has delayed construction of new institutions. In some cases, such as Bihar, even the location has become a matter of dispute between the state and the centre. The centre wants the central university in Patna, while the state wants it in Motihari

• Cost Escalation: Delay in acquiring land has resulted in cost escalation. The initial cost of setting up an IIT was Rs. 760 crore, which is now expected to be over Rs. 999 crores

The 12th plan would also see a higher allocation of funds to support high-quality research in educational institutions and incentives to have more PhD-holders, whose number has been falling in recent years. The proposal, agreed by the ministry, will soon be submitted for approval to the planning commission, which is mandated to finalise the 12th plan for India

Source: November 21, 2011/Hindustan Times

Education is formation of personality

Education is not just gaining information but it is formation of personality, said Dr R Venkata Rao, Vice-Chancellor, National Law School of India University.

Delivering the Business Line Club lecture 'Ethics and values', sponsored by Syndicate Bank for the students of Christ University Institute of Management, Hosur Road, he told them that the Indian education system was the best in the world and there were huge expectations from Indian students.

"Today's youth are confident and assertive and they are not willing to be second best. The Indian brains are demand all over the world. Many world leaders have spoken about what India can achieve in the future as power shift will happen to knowledge societies such as India and China. If the US, is land of opportunities, India is land of ideas and, hence, live up to this expectation," Mr Rao told the students.

On ethics

Recalling his interaction with Mother Teresa, he told them the importance of empathy in human relationship.

"We had invited Mother Teresa for a function at our college. While walking towards the dais, she asked me what did I teach. I told her that I taught law. She told me to teach ethics along with law. "By ethics, I mean show concern for others", she said.

"That really punctured my ego. We always believe that the world starts from us and ends with us. She taught me giving adequate space to others was true human right," Mr Rao told the students.

Goals and values

Sharing examples of various leaders, he told the students that they all had trodden a new path and they had worked sincerely towards their goals.

"Anything in which you are interested is a value. Your approach towards achieving your goal should be absolute and not relativist. Remember that a kite which flies against the wind flies the highest. It is your values that will take you to the top. Your education must teach you where to look and where not to look and what to look at. Remember also that reputation built assiduously over the years can be destroyed in seconds," he told the students.

Mr Rao added, "We are the custodians of this planet. We have the responsibility of handing over the baton to the next generation without dropping the baton."

Syndicate Bank officials provided students with information on 'SyndVidya' scheme, the education loan and interbank mobile payment services. Prof C K T Chandrashekara, Head, Department of Management Studies was present.

Source: November 22, 2011/The Hindu Business Line

Industry, academia tie-up looks to aid education in smaller cities

The tie-up will bridge the gap between education and employability, a source of concern for both the govt and corporate entities.

A group of manufacturing and capital goods companies have come together to hand-hold engineering colleges and universities in small cities and towns, seeking to improve the quality of their graduates and their employment prospects.

Industry experts will be sent to the institutions to help upgrade facilities and teach students, who will also get to work on live corporate projects, as part of the initiative being overseen by K. Venkataramanan, president (operations), Larsen and Toubro Ltd (L&T), India's biggest construction and engineering firm.

Venkataramanan says the quality of many graduates being turned out by Indian universities tends to be sub-standard because of the lack of sufficient interaction between industry and academic institutions. That means many engineering students graduate without possessing the skills needed by industry, hurting their own job prospects while depriving employers of a sufficiently large talent pool.

"Industries as a group and academic institutes as another group should work together to improve the employability situation," Venkataramanan says. "It will be mutually beneficial."

With manufacturing gaining traction again, and the Centre approving a National Manufacturing Policy, these companies say industry needs to contribute its bit to help create an employable workforce with the requisite job skills. The policy approved on 25 October seeks to set up large industrial zones, create 100 million jobs, and expand the share of manufacturing from 16% of gross domestic product at present to 25% by 2025.

Companies taking part in the initiative include steel parts maker Bharat Forge Ltd, power equipment manufacturer Thermax Ltd, Hindustan Dorr Oliver Ltd, a unit of the infrastructure firm IVRCL Ltd, and GW Precision Tools India Pvt. Ltd, according to Venkataramanan.

Engineering students are increasingly trying to get on-the-job style training while still in college, and a new initiative could make that a lot easier.

Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham University in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu; Narsee Monjee Institute in Sirpur, Maharashtra; Chitkara University in Barotiwala, Himachal Pradesh; and Manipal Institute of Technology in Karnataka are some of the institutes involved in the project.

Industry linkage with colleges will bridge the education-employability gap, a source of concern for both the government and corporate entities. It will also take the corporate recruitment process, which is largely tilted towards institutes in big cities, to smaller cities and towns.

According to education services firm Aspire Human Capital Management Pvt. Ltd, India has some 320 million students enrolled in schools and colleges, but less than 25% are employable. India produces around 700,000 engineers every year.

"If industries get involved in improving the employability, then it will boost the human resource supply chain," says Amit Bhatia, chief executive of Aspire Human Capital. "The quality of education and human resources has one goal, hence, embedded employable education and its understanding will be good for their business."

M. Anandakrishnan, chairman of the board of governors at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Kanpur, who will be coordinating the implementation of the initiative on behalf of the institutes, said the industry-academia tie-up will empower colleges and help them address several areas of concern.

"But we will make sure that these colleges and universities don't take this as a plea to increase course fees," said Anandakrishnan, who is also the

head of the higher education committee at industry lobby Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry.

The initiative will serve as a pilot programme that, depending on its success, will pull in more companies to improve their interaction with educational institutes. "The upgrade of curricula and industry experience will be directly taken care of by such a move," he says.

Rajan Saxena, vice-chancellor of Narsee Monjee University in Mumbai, said that while academics will benefit from having access to industry expertise, industry will be able to tap quality graduates at a much lower salary than they would have to pay someone from a big city institute. He said the initiative is a voluntary effort by colleges and companies.

"When you hire from big cities, the salary structure is big. The manufacturing sector, unlike services sector, does not have the liberty to spend more on human resources," says Saxena, a former director of the Indian Institute of Management, Indore.

"Industries also understand that by improving the standard of colleges in small towns, they can hire the same quality with relatively lower salary. Here they will stay with them for a longer time than, say, an IIT graduate," Saxena adds.

Narsee Monjee University, which runs the Narsee Monjee Institute in Sirpur, will coordinate with colleges in smaller cities of the state.

Saxena says new industrial processes, design and latest technology often elude students, and "learning from the shop floor" in industries will help their cause.

Most engineering colleges in small cities lack good laboratories, which may cost crores of rupees to set up or upgrade. The upshot is that students lack access to the technology that makes them job-ready.

"Our students in Sirpur can go to an apparel manufacturer or an engineering company to learn what the new technologies used in producing technical textiles or building a quick road project with prefabricated structures are," Saxena says.

Anandakrishnan says that what industry is looking for is an understanding on the part of students of the design concept, the use of new technology, machinery and management of the factory floor. They need to understand what is an assembly line, for example, and how things are put together.

Venkataramanan says industries, apart from upgrading coursework in line with the needs of colleges, will also gift them machines and equipment that will enable a better learning environment. In return, the companies will expect colleges to help them file patents.

Vijay Pahwa, director, industry relations, Dehradun-based University of Petroleum and Energy Studies, said leading capital goods companies have started looking beyond big cities for hiring personnel, and this initiative will strengthen the trend.

"Smaller town institutes need industry exposure, and we see the benefit here," says S.K. Mohapatra, dean, academics, Thapar University in Patiala, Punjab. "It will also promote research and innovation among companies and share academic best practices and collaborative industry research among each other."

Source: November 22, 2011/Live mint

Good school, good graduate

Judging institutions on the basis of inputs alone does not reflect their contribution to society. Social mission should also form part of the ranking.

The college admission season in the country, in addition to making students anxious, increases the stress on educational institutions. The annual ritual of ranking by different media groups is eagerly awaited by students, their families, and the public, and with trepidation by the institutional alumni, faculty and administration. Those organising the seasonal ritual go to great lengths to highlight the elaborate process of assessment. Diverse aspects are measured-infrastructure, facilities, faculty, staff-student ratios, job placements, research output, budgets, etc. Most indices examine detailed inputs (quality of faculty, infrastructure) but employ crude indicators for the quality of the output (like proportion of graduates placed). Perceptions are given more credence than facts; perceptual ranks and factual data are combined using complex statistical jugglery to produce the final league tables. Year on year, these tables are dominated by the usual suspects, albeit with minor shifts in position, so necessary to maintain credibility and interest in the process. Those at the top of the tables provide a glowing account of the reasons for their success, while the views of the also-rans rarely receive any attention. A few headlines later, the media have moved on to more interesting news with a promise to return in judgment the following season.

While attempts at ranking are common across the globe, the criteria remain superficial and divorced

from national perspectives. The Annals of Internal Medicine published a study by Mullen and colleagues in 2010, which examined the social mission of medical schools in the United States and ranked them according to their social commitment. They developed a metric, which included the contribution of the institutions to primary care (with disciplines of general internal medicine, paediatrics, and family medicine), the geographical distribution of where their graduates work, and the number of doctors from disadvantaged backgrounds. Their finding confirmed that private medical schools, those located in urban areas and those which received substantial research funding had low scores on social mission. The ranking based on social mission differed substantially from the rankings that focussed on subjective perceptions of reputation and those that concentrated on the research funding received. They argued that medical schools, in keeping with their social mission, should initiate programmes which encourage their graduates to work in underserved regions and with disadvantaged populations.

Ranking systems encourage lazy and simplistic forms of thought: good school, good graduate; bad school, bad graduate. Most Indian ranking systems prefer non-systematic sampling of professional opinion and hearsay. They then add a dose of concrete facts such as infrastructural details, faculty-student ratios and research grants to fashion these elite status lists. These are then projected as definitive conclusions that a college's quality can be graded and passed on directly to their graduates. However, the fact that these ranks may not reflect the quality of graduates or the priorities for India is hardly a concern.

National priorities or international concerns: Measures, which reflect research funding and output and cutting-edge technology, while significant, tend to focus on the social needs of the rich and urban classes and on western priorities. They do not take into consideration the urgent priorities of India's majority; nor do these seem to influence the health, social, economic and quality-of-life outcomes of the majority of the Indian population. Training graduates for western and Indian corporate markets cannot surely be the only national priority when a significant proportion of India's population lives in poverty, suffers from preventable diseases and does not have access to clean water, sanitation, nutrition, basic education, affordable health care and sustainable employment. The dominance of scientific theory and international markets, considered universal and authentic, over local practice, deemed trivial

and less valid, makes for the dismissal of regional concerns and context. This is true for much of Indian higher education, which is rarely rooted in the local culture and its concerns.

Excellence and relevance: Indian higher education, at least a significant proportion of it, exposes students to isolated bits of content-specific knowledge. They are rarely taught to relate such learning to other disciplines or to apply it in the world around them. A boxed approach to excellence, through books and in classrooms, prevents the integration of new learning with life outside our universities. The acceptance of received wisdom and the lack of critical thought to apply and test it in the local context makes the quest for such excellence less relevant to India. The brightest minds, after graduation, find themselves uncomfortable in the alien environment in the country, with its strange logic and different practices, and prefer leaving for greener and more comfortable pastures.

Contradictory facets: The diverse aims of education pose contradictory challenges for universities. Course requirements to achieve the social mission of education are very different from training programmes for research. Colleges, which focus on narrow objectives, would fail miserably on others. Those which emphasise local relevance would necessarily have to tailor their programmes to achieve any degree of success. However, their lack of emphasis on an internationally prioritised education would handicap their graduates in the capitalistic marketplace. Skewed ranking and assessments highlight achievements, which are biased and partial.

Comprehensive assessments: All institutions benefit from a re-examination of their vision, mission and performance. An analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats needs to be regular and routine. However, these assessments have to be detailed and comprehensive, educational and instructive, and should be able to hold a mirror for institutional and individual reflection. The exercise should provide a roadmap and direction for growth and development. Such appraisals are rare in Indian academia.

Simple measures: Education has many dimensions: acquisition of knowledge and expertise, training of mental abilities and development of character. The training of mental faculties and character and the assimilation of knowledge for practice, teaching, research and management are dissimilar and add complexity to the educational process. The use of single measures to capture achievements in these disparate dimensions is to underestimate the

ASERF E News Bulletin on EDUCATION

complexity of the task. The use of a single number to rank diverse facets — although it provides an illusion of certainty — is to belittle the issues. It attempts to measure the immeasurable.

Moving forward

Education is based on the premise that knowledge does not give rise to the character of a culture. Rather, culture determines knowledge. Education, through the process of transmitting societal values, prepares the young for their social inheritance. The divide between the cultures of Indian higher education, which seem to cater to the elite, to the exclusion of the needs of the majority, mandates review. Esoteric research, albeit replicating western notions in Indian contexts, is often out of touch with local needs and reality. Cutting-edge technology, while important, can also overwhelm institutions and take away the focus from education.

Despite different urgent national priorities, India continues to fall back on old rankings that highlight the needs and aspirations of a minority. The systems of funding have also encouraged such a movement towards "international" education at the expense of urgent local but less lucrative and glamorous endeavours. What good are educational systems to the country if they do not supply people and professionals to meet its requirements? While not all educational institutions need to be the same, they need to focus on the distinct needs of the nation.

Assessments of institutions should examine the quality of their graduates, the location of their practice, and their contribution to social capital. Judging institutions by emphasising inputs does not reflect their contribution to society. The addition of 'social mission' to assessments will make them more comprehensive and relevant to India's needs. Institutional assessments should be in the context of stated objectives and past performance, with a view to bringing course correction. Periodic internal assessment and external reviews are mandatory.

There is a need for educational institutions to seek new visions, embrace social missions that address regional needs, and educate students from rural and disadvantaged backgrounds. It is widely acknowledged that traditional selection criteria based on examinations, which focus on theory and cognitive assessments, do not necessarily translate into professional ability or social change. Academic success reflects only one of many intelligences; a willingness to learn, positive attitude, sense of responsibility and zest for life need to be nurtured. Assessments of educational institutions should be

comprehensive and should examine their impact on society. While many will acknowledge the superficial nature of the current ranking systems, most will agree that that their focus remains on magazine sales and profits.

Source: November 23, 2011/DNA India

Celebrating 60 years of top-notch engineering education

The student population is above 8,000, studying in 30 UG and 40 PG programmes, 425 scholars pursue doctoral programmes

PSG & Sons' Charities, formed in 1926, was designated as 'The Fifth Brother' of the four sons of P.S. Govindasamy Naidu, namely P.S.G. Venkatasamy Naidu, P.S.G. Rangasamy Naidu, P.S.G. Ganganaidu and P.S.G. Narayanasamy Naidu. The institution had the objective of promoting industry and education in the country. The 'Fifth Brother' was given an equal share while dividing their inheritance, making the fifth sibling grow and prosper along with the others.

With the belief that a class-less society with equal opportunities for all could be created only based on education, the PSG family concentrated on establishing educational institutions. Now, 'The Fifth Brother' has generated around 25 educational institutions ranging from kindergarten to medical education. PSG College of Technology is one of them.

PSG College of Technology commenced its academic activities on July 16, 1951 and this is its Diamond Jubilee year.

Mission

According to the Managing Trustee of PSG & Sons' Charities, L. Gopalakrishnan, its mission includes, providing world-class engineering education, foster research and development, evolving innovative applications of technology, encouraging entrepreneurship, and moulding young men and women capable of assuming leadership.

The college strives to achieve this mission statement in the following ways: Develop curriculum relevant to socio-economic as well as individual needs, focus on industry-institute collaboration, incubate entrepreneurs and promote leadership skills, advance career and development of faculty, and establish a sound alumni base.

At present, the college has a student population of above 8,000 studying in 30 under-graduate programmes and 40 post-graduate programmes, and 425 scholars pursue doctoral programmes. The members of the faculty, with proven track records in

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E - Bulletin No - 120   28   November 16 – 30, 2011

academics and industry, form the strength of the institution.

Along with the traditional courses, the college imparts both need and value-based education.

PSG College of Technology has an independent placement office devoted to cater to the needs of organisations in conducting campus interviews for placements. More than 150 national and multinational companies visit the college for campus recruitment annually.

Over 90 per cent of the students secure job offers before they complete their programmes of study.

Successful industry-institute interaction and the proximity of the PSG Industrial Institute encouraged the management to start sandwich programmes in 1983. The special feature of the sandwich programmes in the PSG Tech is that the students simultaneously attend the industry and the theory classes. Today, the campus placements of sandwich students are commendable.

The autonomous status that the institution obtained in 1978 has empowered and enabled PSG Tech to design and implement appropriate curriculum to meet the requirements of the changing business / industrial environment and the society.

With the financial support of various agencies, industries, and international organisations, a string of advanced centres has been established on the campus to cater to the various requirements of the students.

Organisations such as Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), Coimbatore District Small Scale Industries' Association (CODISSIA), Small Industries' Testing and Research Centre, etc., strengthen the practical side of the curriculum.

Research and development is an important part of academic activity in the PSG College of Technology. These R&D activities help to gain deeper insight into the technological domain and help teachers impart subject knowledge to the students more effectively.

Research projects

By virtue of its well-equipped laboratory facilities and motivated faculty, the college has completed as many as 200 funded research projects and 88 research projects are under progress. Each and every department is accountable for several innovative projects and products.

Continuous rapport with alumni enables the institution to get to know their achievements. The alumni are actively involved in various activities of the alma mater.

The college has been a primary source for developing several competent leaders to head universities and engineering colleges.

The institution and the alumni are celebrating the year with a whole lot of academic activities, including national and international conferences and the Tech Ex 2011 Exhibition.

Source: November 23, 2011/The Hindu

How a weak rupee will affect student borrowers

As the rupee-dollar parity becomes increasingly skewed, students in search of quality overseas education are in a quandary. To provide them relief, the Indian banking sector has just vowed to stand by all such students who want to study abroad, by agreeing to top up all educational loans either taken recently or being processed, to meet the gap created by the falling rupee.

This comes as a huge relief to a whole lot of students grappling with the increasing cost of education due to the rising rupee. They may need to cough up much more for their overseas studies in future as the rupee may slide further.

As many as 1,04,000 students went to the US in 2010-11, while 41,350 went to the UK in 2010. "Students will not be left high and dry in their pursuit of higher education," said Union Bank of India chairman and managing director MV Nair.

For an international student, the cost of studying at a US university for a year, inclusive of tuition and living expenses, varies between $25,000 and $60000 for an undergraduate course, and $25,000 and $60,000 or more in case of MBA.

At the current exchange rate, that works out to Rs 13 lakh-plus to nearly Rs 32 lakh per year. Bankers said the average loan size for foreign studies is about Rs 14 lakh while they are allowed to lend up to Rs 20 lakh. Payments are made every semester.

The rupee has slipped 17% in the last five months. Parents will have to cough up more if the local currency stays at this level for the entire tenure of the course for which the loan was taken.

New Borrowers Hit Hard

Investigations conducted by ET reveal that the weakening rupee is impacting various borrowers in the education space in a number of ways.

A student borrower who is getting a top-up now from the bank, in effect, will have to pay back

more, since the top-up will get added to the loan amount.

A parent who is funding a child's overseas education from personal savings will be critically hit as the rupee slips more and more.

The Reserve Bank of India says Indians remitted $45.8 million between April and August and $150 million in 2010-11 for overseas studies. But the rupee depreciation has come as an advantage for students who are about to start repaying their loan after having completed studies and having got a job abroad that pays in dollars.

They will be smiling all the way to the bank since they will need to pay less due to the falling rupee. Those who have already paid the course fee either from their own pockets or through loans will not be impacted from the exchange rate fluctuations since they will be paying back in rupee through the contracted EMI process.

The pain of students planning to study abroad is likely to multiply Foreign exchange players anticipate the rupee to come under more pressure. Money changer CentrumDirect's vice-president and treasury head Hariprasad said: "The volatility in the currency market is likely to continue for at least another quarter. If the RBI does not intervene to curb the fall, then much lower levels for the rupee can be expected."

Jagannadham Thunuguntla, strategist and head of research at the New Delhi-based SMC Global Securities, said: "It's not the bottom of the panic. It's just the beginning. Even 58-60 levels for the rupee-dollar exchange rate are possible from hereon." Accordingly, students who have just taken educational loans or are in the process of getting one would need a top-up.

"We shall certainly stand by the students for their increased educational loan needs on account of currency fluctuations," said Indian Bank chairman and managing director TM Bhasin. The students and their co-applications will, however, have to bring in more collateral for the top-up. "It will differ from case to case, based on the cover available and the value of relationship," Nair said. Bank of Baroda executive director RK Bakshi said: "Individual cases will be decided on specific merits of the case. In credit, there is no one-size-fits-all plan."

For people like Kolkata's P Bhattacharya, who pay out of their own pockets, the steadily depreciating rupee has left them in the lurch. Bhattacharya's daughter Pallami is pursuing her Masters in Computer Science and Engineering at the

University of Flor-ida. Even after a 60% tuition fee waiver, her tuition, accommodation and other charges cost Bhattacharya, a salaried professional, $30,000 a year (nearly Rs 16 lakh at the current exchange rate).

He paid the first tranche of around $15,000 in August, when the dollar was at the 46.87 mark. The next payment is due in January, and having just sent his daughter pocket money at the new exchange rate, he fears the rupee will breach further lows.

What's worse is that Bhattacharya has funded Pallami's education from his own savings, with help from his family. "We had factored in rupee at the Rs 50 level. This (the current level) is completely beyond our expectations. Now, I may have to dip into my PF account to sponsor my daughter's education," he said

Bangalore-based IT professional Tarun Singh had saved up for an executive MBA programme at a US business school and had decided to fund the shortfall through a loan. Now he says he will have to take a top-up.

"I'm regretting my decision. The payback period is going to be longer and who knows if it's going to be worth it."

In response to an email query from ET, a spokesperson at the US consulate general in Kolkata said: "As the rate has just changed, it is a little too early to gauge the reactions. The United States values diversity in our educational institutions, including international students. Consequently, there are a variety of need-based financial assistance programs and merit-based scholarships designed to ensure that talented students from around the world benefit from a higher education experience in the United States."

Source: November 23, 2011/Economic Times

Technology will increase achievement

Information Age, Age of Technology, and The Digital Revolution — these are just a few of the names that describe the time in which we live. It's an era ruled by gadgets and electronics that create learning opportunities at any given moment. It is the duty of educators to ensure that all students are well equipped with tools that they need to stay ahead of today's technology movement.

The Natchez-Adams School District is working to harness the power of technology to engage students and provide motivational tools for teachers to increase student achievement. One strategy that is being implemented is the district's science and

technology initiative which is designed to increase both a student's mastery of foundational skills and a student's attitude toward schooling and learning. This initiative will also support the implementation of the National Educational Technology Standards, which uses technology in K-12 education to enable students to acquire skills needed to live and work in an increasingly digital society. All schools in the Natchez-Adams School District will participate in programs designed to engage our students through science and technology.

One such program will be piloted in grades 4, 7 and 10, the grades in which students take a state writing exam. Research has shown that integrating the use of iPads into the curriculum increases a student's reading and writing skills.

By piloting the use of this new technology, we can collect valuable data on whether student achievement is positively impacted and make informed decisions about future purchases.

In addition to helping students become better readers and writers, iPads offer endless other educational possibilities for teaching and learning. The students of the 21st century have never lived without technology, and they are quite adept at utilizing various types of technologies. They are accustomed to interacting with cell phones, computers, social media, etc. Therefore, the educational arena is experiencing a paradigm shift to include the use of various technologies in grades K-12.

Research indicates that the Internet and technology are powerful tools for teaching and learning and can have a positive impact when successfully integrated as part of the curriculum.

Consequently, we are working to provide our students with access to technology that will increase engagement and critical thinking while providing students with real-life applications.

Our intent is not to replace traditional resources but to recognize the power of technology as a necessary instructional tool. Instructional technology coupled with real-life applications helps students learn to make inferences, analyze data and predict outcomes — all valuable real-life application skills needed to meet current academic expectations.

In addition to piloting iPads in grades 4, 7 and 10, the district is also upgrading science equipment at all grade levels, K-12.

Teachers will soon receive updated instructional resources, computer software, portable science labs, microscopes and research equipment.

We feel certain that providing our students access to the latest technology and science resources will enhance teaching and increase student achievement.

Source: November 23, 2011/Natchezdemocrat.com

University students increase rapidly, but university lecturers do not increase accordingly

VietNamNet Bridge – The rapid increase in the number of students has forced universities to recruit new lecturers regularly. However, it is very difficult to recruit lecturers these days due to the unreasonable remuneration offers.

Professor Nguyen Viet Thinh, President of the Hanoi University of Education, said that the school has to recruit lecturers monthly, because a lot of lecturers leave for training courses or have a break. Candidates come from different sources. Some of them are excellent graduates from the Hanoi University of Education themselves. Others are the lecturers of other schools, or overseas Vietnamese students, who have finished foreign training courses, or scientific researchers.

Demand high, income low

The Hanoi University of Mining and Geology every year recruits nearly 100 lecturers for different majors, but it never finds enough lecturers. According to Le Trong Thang, Head of the Training Division of the school, only the major faculties of the school, such as geology and oil and gas, can attract good candidates. Meanwhile, it is very difficult to find lecturers for other faculties, even though the school accepts the graduates at "good" instead of "excellent" degree.

The Banking Academy recruits lecturers every year, but it admits that it is very difficult to find lecturers for information technology faculty. The candidates, after becoming lecturers, have to spend one or two years for the probation period during which they have to upgrade their qualifications.

However, according to Dung, a lot of excellent graduates accept to stay at the schools to work as lecturers because they hope they can find the opportunities to obtain scholarship to fund training courses abroad. However, after returning from overseas training courses, they leave the schools for other jobs, because of the low income schools offer.

Dung also said that the key problem behind the difficulties in recurring young lecturers is the overly low income. An excellent graduate, if staying at the school to work as lecturers, can earn 2 million dong a month, too low if comparing with other jobs.

Le Anh Tuan from the Thanh Dong University complains that it is more difficult for people founded less prestigious schools to recruit lecturers. He complained that despite great efforts, the school still suffers from the "lecturer bleeding", when lecturers leave for other schools to enjoy higher incomes.

Retaining young lecturers with scholarships

In order to avoid the brain-drain and retain qualified people, universities now have to use different methods to develop high quality labor force themselves.

Leader of a big university in Hanoi said that young lecturers usually have the willing to study further after they graduate universities. Therefore, they always hope that they can find the opportunities to go studying abroad.

Therefore, he said, one of the methods to retain talented lecturers is offering young lecturers the opportunities to study abroad or attend domestic training courses.

Besides, the school has to try to offer "acceptable income" to lecturers, and create favorable conditions for them to get legal extra income, besides the monthly salaries they get from the state budget.

Dr Do Que Luong, Deputy President of the Hanoi University of Business and Technology, said that the school creates most favorable conditions for all permanent lecturers, especially young lecturers, to go abroad to follow the training courses for master degree or doctorate. After they finish the training courses, they can return to work for the school. Meanwhile, with higher level of degrees, they can enjoy higher pay.

The HCM City University of Agriculture and Forestry has also been running a program to create high quality lecturers. 150 out of the 650 lecturers have been sent to training courses to obtain master degree and doctorates.

The latest report by the Ministry of Education and Training shows that 286 schools have sent 24,396 lecturers to training courses for MA and PhD decrees by 2020.

Source: November 23, 2011/Vietnam net

College education not on a par with global standards, says NAAC director

National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) Director H A Ranganath on Thursday called upon concerned persons to introspect about why Indian universities are not on a par with global standards. There is a dire need to introspect where we have gone wrong and unless quality issues are addressed, there can be no hope for improvement,'' he said. He was speaking to students of Bharathiyar University during its 27th convocation ceremony on Thursday.

Ranganath said that if one wants to succeed in today's world, he has to be prepared to compete effectively in the global arena. He exhorted the younger generation to work with conviction and dedication, and have compassion for fellow human beings.

Tamil Nadu Governor K Roasiah, who presided over the function in his capacity as chancellor of the university, gave away certificates to the students. As many as 25182 postgraduates, 41925 undergraduates, 754 PG Diploma holders, 1723 M Phil holders, 458 Ph D winners and 1 DSc Scholar received their qualifying certificates.

"Universities propagating specialized subjects like law, medicine, engineering and languages have proliferated and have added to the diversity and plurality of the system. The genesis of mono-faculty universities has led to a plethora of problems," noted the governor in his speech. Criticizing such universities, he said that the mono-faculty system lacks representation in other fields of study and thereby it is not a holistic approach in imparting knowledge. Traditional universities have been deprived of major disciplines and the very concept of a university has been dented, he said.

P Palaniappan, Minister for Higher education, said, While China has 2,236 higher education institutes, India has just 602 institutes. Only 13.5 per cent of students are pursuing higher education. While in China 22.11 per cent of students are taking up higher education,'' he said.

Source: November 25, 2011/Times of India

Getting it right on Education

CNN's Fareed Zakaria - his recent shows called '*Restoring the American dream: Fixing Education.'* As a run up to the show, he wrote several interesting blog posts.

As Indians living in India, we tend to romanticize the Western education system. No bags, no books, no homework, no exams, no grading, no pressure; more play, more activities, more time for hobbies, more fun. Indians living abroad, especially those with kids, think twice about coming back to India and enrolling their kids into India's competitive education environment. We have heard stories of distant cousins in the US pursuing courses in the arts or philosophy, something that most would balk

at, as a career option in India. At best, they can be hobbies, our fathers would tell us. We have also heard stories of how college drop outs made it big in America and we tend to question the sanctity of college education itself.

Zakaria's blog posts are backed with statistics and that's what makes them very interesting. While this financial crisis has hit us all badly, one of the good things is that emerging countries like India have got an opportunity to learn from the actions (which in hindsight we call mistakes) of the developed world. It also reinforces the truth in the various cultural traits and principles that Indian parents have been following for generations.

Culturally, as parents, we do not allow our kids to work in the summer holidays. We do not even allow our kids to try to find a job after finishing class 12. The path is firmly chalked out: School – Junior college – Bachelor's – Master's/ Professional qualification.

Here's a statistic from Zakaria on the American experience:

25% of Americans that start high school do not graduate. Entering the workforce without a high school diploma means an unemployment rate three-and-a-half times the rate of those with a college degree. And for those who do find full-time work, they on average earn less than half of what a college graduate makes each year. Education is and always has been the fastest way up the socioeconomic ladder. And the payoff from a good education remains evident even in this weak recovery. The unemployment rate for college graduates is just 4%, but for high school dropouts it is 14%. If you drop out of high school—and the US has a 25% dropout rate—you will have a depressed standard of living for the rest of your life.

Another factor among Indian parents in making a career choice has always been economic viability.

A fascinating piece of Zakaria's data was a comparison of the top subjects that Americans study in their colleges versus those that International students chose to study in America. There are, for example, more parks, recreation, leisure, and fitness studies majors than physical science majors among American students as compared to international ones. '*Are college students studying the subjects that will lead to good jobs and keep America competitive in the world economy?*'

Of course, in India we do not drop out of school and college is not an option but a compulsion. And

we continue to evaluate career options based on economic viability. But within those environments, we have seen certain changes or attempts to change, such as, doing away with homework or eliminating the grading system. Sure we need change but I think we need to tread with caution. As a mother of a preschooler, I think homework and grading systems have their place. The attempt should be at taking the 'rank' pressure off children and ensuring they are able to compete smartly rather than eliminating these systems altogether. And that's where the responsibility shifts to parents. The schools only cater to demand. If parents demand eliminating homework and grading, schools will be happy to comply. But once the child steps out of school, who is responsible to ensure he/ she remains globally competitive? Math and science apart, the system should also be able to prepare the child to be a good team player, manage pressure and make smart decisions.

Here's another piece from Zakaria where he talks about college drop out - Steve Jobs: *We talk a lot about the genius of Steve Jobs these days, and justifiably, because he was a genius. But he also grew up in an environment that helped. He graduated from high school in 1972 at a time when the California public school system was ranked first in the country and American public education was the envy of the world.*

At the end of the day, there must be something right in our education system that is making Indians a global force to reckon with. Just some food for thought

Source: November 25, 2011/[Economic Times](#)

Experts stress on skills to teach spl kids

The International conference on education inclusion on Saturday stressed on meeting the challenge of learning difficulties of differently abled children by imparting special skills to teachers for imparting education to these children.

Over 24 academicians from ten countries, besides India, presented papers at the three-day conference organized jointly by the Association for Promotion of Creative Learning (APCL), Patna, the UK-based KG Foundation and State Council of Education Research and Training, at the School of Creative Learning, Nargada, Danapur.

Birmingham City University (UK) teacher Dr Nevel A Vessel said learning disability sufferers were vulnerable to stereotyping, discrimination, negative statements labelling, physical and psychological abuse and isolation. He said urgent actions were needed to treat them with respect and dignity.

Prof Prabhat Ranjan of Dhirubhai Ambani Institute of ICT, Gandhinagar, stressed on using brain-computer interface for inclusive learning after judging the cognitive abilities of the children through brain mapping.

APCL executive president Mridula Prakash and principal secretary, state planning and development department Vijoy Prakash - who was also chairperson of the conference -- gave a case study using Madhubani Painting for Educational Inclusion of women to easily learn geometric figures, symbols , patterns, reading and writing on walls and floors.

Co-chairperson of the conference and founder of KG Foundation Gajendra Verma prescribed rational educational inclusion of the children using the tools for self examination and developing education tools for teachers to impart education under local norms. Prof Deepak Kumar of JNU said Mahatma Gandhi adhered to social accountability of education. When Gandhi visited the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, in 1920 ssshe was explicit that social aspects of a scientific research was more relevant.

Source: November 27, 2011/Times of India

Indian students should consider studying in China'

What is the significance of the tie-up between University of Mumbai and the three Chinese universities?

The three universities we have tied up with (Tianjin University, Tianjin University of Technology and Nankai University) are among the top five universities in China, well known for engineering and technology-related programmes. We hope to facilitate faculty and student exchange, collaboration in research, and an exchange of language teachers, at undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

Does this mean that Mandarin will be taught as a degree programme in Mumbai University? Not as of now. However, the language will be taught as a part of vocational studies programmes, which we plan to introduce in the Centre for Confucian Studies in Mumbai. This centre will promote cultural exchange between the two countries.

Do you think Indian students should consider China for higher education?

Definitely. Indian students are only looking at developed countries for higher education. However, this mindset must change. China offers excellent facilities and its education system is on par with that of developed countries. This is because many of its technology courses are conducted in English. The universities with which we have signed MoUs have faculties of international repute and superior research facilities. Moreover, Chinese universities focus more on practical learning than on theory.

What are the main differences between the University of Mumbai and Chinese universities? Our universities cater to different socio-economic groups, while the Chinese system is more exclusive. Chinese universities are far superior in terms of facilities and infrastructure.

How does the University of Mumbai plan to attract international students?

Until last year, we did not have many foreign students. However, this year we have about 60 to 65 international students, most of whom are from South Asia.

How many Chinese students are there in India?

About 2,000, according to the Consulate General of China.

Does the University of Mumbai plan to sign MoUs with other countries?

We have signed an MoU with Edith Cowan University from Australia with a view to promote faculty and student exchange and joint projects where internships could be split between India and Australia.

Source: November 29, 2011/Hindustan Times

A subject that won't vanish

Inclusive growth is a regular topic for TV shows, political parties and boardrooms. Talk must be turned into action

India's private sector needs to watch only one Bollywood movie this year: Aarakshan. Unlike most big budget movies, this one tackles a sensitive subject—quotas—in educational institutions. Though the film is focused squarely on education, the issue of affirmative action not only haunts educational institutions, but radiates to corporate life as well.

It's ironic, but the world's two greatest and largest democracies face similar issues in helping long suppressed minorities uplift their status. To help correct the injustice, government programmes in both countries were developed to help the underprivileged. Affirmative action was the course chosen in the US. In India, it was a similar programme, reservations. The difference being that in the US, the programmes were not just in educational institutions, but in corporations as well.

Aarakshan highlights the frustration of a Brahmin student who cannot attend the institution of his choice because of an increased quota. A friend questions why should "his kind" be punished for playing by the rules, working and studying hard; if the underprivileged want access to universities, they should stop being lazy and work hard. The retort by Saif Ali Khan is one for the ages. He says who is he to tell him what is hard work, paraphrasing here, "who are you to teach us about hard work. We have tilled your fields, built your homes, washed your clothes, cleaned your houses, and even more so we have cleaned your shit. Don't teach us about hard work, we know hard work". The debate is not too dissimilar to what could be heard in the US.

There the similarity to the US ends. For most part, the issue of quotas has stayed out of the private sector in India. Unlike the US, where most Fortune 500 firms have aggressive affirmative action programmes, similar programmes don't exist in India's largest companies. But Indian companies can't wish away the issue. It's just a matter of time.

Proposals have been mooted—and for the most part rejected—to impose some sort of reservation for the underprivileged in the private sector in India. Indian firms don't want more interference from the government. The cover of India Today recently had the picture of the heads of India's four leading corporations talking about aggressively exploring opportunities abroad because of frustration with government policies and interference at home.

Yet, the issue won't go away. Take a close look inside any Indian corporation and it again won't be too dissimilar to any US corporation. Just as in the US, Indian corporations will have under-represented minorities working at them. However, in India—and this is a hard but glaring truth—the underprivileged are much more likely to be working as part of the army of office boys, custodial staff, canteen workers, and drivers. Again, it's similar to the US, where African-Americans are still more likely to be employed as maintenance engineers than financial engineers.

In the US, though, corporations have taken a step forward and worked hard to recruit, train and retain minorities. Many would argue that it's not enough and they may be right. Still, it's a start.

Indian companies need to embrace a proactive policy on affirmative action. There is little doubt that India's business people care. I have yet to meet a person not concerned for the welfare of those less well off or society in general. One colleague I met has paid of the education for the children of every driver or office boy who has worked for him. Others have devoted themselves to helping non-governmental organizations grow, or done similar activities.

Corporate India is far from callous and affirmative action is in its best interest. Individuals and corporations don't live in an isolated island. Corporations will be stronger when all Indians feel that they have a true chance at the best jobs at the best companies. Paraphrasing Saif Ali Khan, the less privileged are only asking for a chance. Indian corporations need to make sure that everyone has a fighting chance to obtain and succeed in a job in corporate India.

Inclusive growth is topic dejeuner for nightly TV shows, political parties, coffee shops and boardrooms. Talk needs to be made into action. The government is launching one social sector scheme after another; one can argue the merits of some of them. But what is true is the Chinese proverb that says give a man a fish, he eats for a day, teach a man to fish, he eats for life. With proper help and guidance, many marginalized members of society can become salespeople, programmers, bankers, flight attendants, consultants, designers and more. The push to impose quotas will come if marginalized members of society do not believe they can get a seat at the corporate table. Indian firms are better off helping now and making improvements on it before government gets involved. Inclusive growth is a mantra for any government in India. Corporate India needs to play its part.

Source: November 29, 2011/Live Mint

Education sector needs urgent reforms

India is credited with having the world's second largest population and with more than 50% below 35 years of age, the country has the potential to become a hub of trained manpower provided this young population is given the right education and training. The role of the private sector in providing education has increased with more than 14 million students studying in around 30,000 institutions across the country.

It is predicted that the participation of the private sector in higher education will increase in the future. Yet, according to Prof. M. Anandakrishnan, Chairman, FICCI Higher Education Committee, the preference of institutions by top ranking students is not the private institutions. This turns the focus on the kind of initiatives that will help in the sustainable growth of the private education sector.

The private education sector suffers from drawbacks on issues like quality, fee structure, governance models; affordability etc. there is also a need for the private sector to take the right steps to reduce these drawbacks.

As a whole, Indian higher education is riddled with challenges like the need for better institutes, faculty, more research intensive institutes and employability. To discuss these issues the 'FICCI Higher Education Summit' was held from November 11-12 in New Delhi, on the theme, 'Strategies for expansion in Higher Education in India.'

In concurrence with the summit, FICCI in conjunction with Ernst and Young released the 'EY-FICCI report on Higher Education in India' Here are some key points from the report:

The Indian higher education system has shown remarkable growth over the last decade to become one of the world's largest systems of higher education. The number of institutions in India has grown at a CAGR of 11% and student enrolment has grown at a CAGR of 6%.

The highest number of institutions is in the central region while the highest increase in student enrolment has been from the southern region. The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) is currently about 13.8%, with West India having the highest GER of 25.7%.

While these trends bode well for the Indian education sector the GER in comparison to other countries trails significantly compared to the world average. The government has set a target of 30% GER by 2020, but this too seems impossible to achieve with the current pace of growth.

The Indian education sector is plagued by issues of access, equity and quality.

However the private sector has played an important role in the growth of the higher education sector especially in areas like engineering and management.

In the future too the private sector is expected to play a key role. The report focuses on the opportunities available to private education providers and the key aspects, trends and regulations in relation to these options.

The report also reveals that if the education sector has to further grow, there is a need to develop a collaborative network with industry players and foreign education providers. For the present players the challenges are getting faculty of quality and handling a complex regulatory framework.

These challenges can be mitigated by simplifying the regulatory framework on the part of the government, allowing more autonomy and promoting institutions that want to operate on a not-for profit basis. Steps need to be taken to immediately solve challenges like lack of quality faculty and adequate infrastructure.

Other issues faced by the Indian education sector are- access, quality, equity. With a GER of 13.8% and enrollment of 14.6 million, the access to higher education in India is currently available only to a limited section of the population.

With regard to equity, there is a wide disparity in higher education across states, urban and rural areas, gender and communities.

Regarding quality 45% of the positions for professors, 51% positions for readers, and 53% positions for lecturers were vacant in Indian universities in 2007-08.

There are infrastructure deficiencies in more then 48% universities and 69% of colleges. Libraries are ill-equipped and many universities teach outdated curricula. Regarding unaccredited institutions, as of March 2011, only 161 universities and 4,371 colleges had been accredited by NAAC.

Other key points of the report are:

• So far the private sector has played an important role in increasing the number and enrolment in professional courses

• Number of colleges have increased thanks to less operational barriers and investment in establishing them

• Study centre and online education is still at a nascent stage

• Vocation based professional courses have increased

• Due to shortage of good quality higher education in the country many established players have expanded by opening multiple campuses

• General courses in arts and science impart generalised skills with less focus on employability

• General courses account for more than four-fifths of total student enrolment

• Domestic institutions are collaborating with foreign institutions, especially in professional fields such as engineering and management, to enhance their value

• The report concludes that Indian universities and the education sector need urgent reforms and a roadmap for change. The government, industry and

academia realise this need and are determined to bring about this change

Source: November 30, 2011/The Hindu

Collaboration in higher education is major pillar in U.S.-India dialogue'

"More than a hundred thousand Indians are currently studying in the U.S., and an increasing number of Americans are discovering India as a quality education destination. When it comes to education, the dreams and desires of the U.S. and India are one and the same.

Collaboration in higher education is a major pillar in U.S.-India strategic dialogue," Anand Krishna, Information Officer, U.S. Consulate-General, Chennai, has said.

Mr. Krishna was addressing students of St. Joseph's College here on Tuesday, while promoting International Education Week.

The initiative, which was started in 2000 and observed in over 100 countries, is a joint initiative of the U.S. Department of State and the U.S.

Department of Education "to promote programmes that prepare Americans for a global environment and attract future leaders from India and other countries to study, learn, and exchange experiences in the U.S."

The theme of this year's education week is "International education: inspiring students locally to succeed globally".

Awards, fellowships

As part of this, Mr. Krishna, speaking on 'Research collaboration, study and work abroad, and entrepreneurship', said: "Promoting research and scholarship has been a hallmark of the U.S.-India partnership. Our two governments are partnering to offer Fulbright-Nehru Awards, higher education fellowships for the most outstanding students, academics and professionals in India and the U.S."

"President Barack Obama and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh launched the Obama-Singh initiative during the latter's State Visit to the U.S. in November 2009.

Under this 10 million dollar program institutions can propose innovative projects to advance scholarship and teaching, and promote reliable, long-term communication between partner institutions. Over the next decade we can expect to see many fruitful outcomes from these partnerships," he added.

Source: November 30, 2011/The Hindu

Leadership is India's biggest worry: Jim O' Neill, Economist, Goldman Sachs

The Goldman Sachs economist who coined the acronym Bric -Brazil, Russia, India, and China -has blamed India's leadership for failing to implement reforms that would enable the nation of more than a billion to boost growth and fulfil its potential.

Jim O'Neill, currently the chairman of Goldman Sachs Asset Management told ET that India seems to "deliberately avoid FDI" a term that might resonate with many because of the ferocious political row over the government decision opening India's retail sector to global supermarkets such as Wal Mart Inc and Tesco Plc.

"India is the greatest mystery among the Brics," O'Niell writes in Growth Map, a book that looks at economic opportunities in the Bric and other emerging markets. "Its problem is one of a state of mind. The problems it faces all boils down to one issue: Leadership. India must wrestle to change and advance because it is such a complex nation to govern. I sincerely hope India can achieve a Chinese-style growth."

O'Neill, who coined the acronym in his previous avatar as Head of Global Economic Research, gives short shrift to arguments put forth by the UPA government that external events, such as those in Europe were derailing its growth agenda. Instead, he said, India needs to implement reforms, such as the just announced move permitting FDI in retail.

"You want to know what you need to do to stop your currency crashing, and insulate yourself against external shocks? Implement reforms like FDI in retail. Accelerate the rate of reforms. The exchange rate is vulnerable because externally the BOP is weak.

India has failed to attract much FDI; it seems to deliberately avoid it. It's true you have no control over the oil price outlook, but if you don't tackle supply and productivity issues, you make yourself vulnerable to external shocks. There have always been external shocks in history. You didn't see an America or a Japan complaining about external shocks, it didn't stop them growing," O'Niell said.

His theory is that exchange rates reflect a country's purchasing power parity, adjusted for its relative productivity performance, the basis for GS dynamic equilibrium exchange rate parameter (GDSEER). Goldman Sachs uses a parameter called Growth Environment Scores (GES), an index that measures a set of macro and micro variables including inflation , deficit, use of technology, life expectancy, education, corruption and others. India consistently

lags far behind the other Brics, especially on education, technology and FDI.

Despite the strong words, if you think he's writing off India, he isn't. He seems just as frustrated as most Indians that a country with such massive inherent growth advantages - the most favourable demographic in the world, he estimates it could well rise to 30 times its current economic size by 2050 - isn't able to get its act together on agricultural productivity, education, technology, and reforms. Given that the basic premise of the Bric analysis is that a country's working population plus their productivity equals global size and growth. India's got the working population, but will have to tackle the productivity angle.

Ten years ago, O'Niell came to the conclusion, after 9/11, that globalisation couldn't be all about Americanisation. It led him to look farther afield, and he coined an acronym Bric which he said would become the new world powers. The rest is now economic history. "People joke that if I'd patented the term, I could own an island," he said. Ten years on, the only regret O'Neill has is that they were conservative with their projections. Ironically, he never visited any of the Brics except China before 2001.

"Now I'm always being invited," he said. He insisted that the Bric story is "nowhere near finished". In this decade, he pointed out, China is the single-most important country in the world. But for 2020-2030, India could emerge as the single most important country in the world.

Source: November 30, 2011/Economic Times

Is education still the best route to take?

Students, going overseas for higher education, probably formed the first wave of Indians who adopted globalisation long before the concept created a buzz among Indian corporates and the government. IITians who went to the US in the 70s & 80s, for masters degrees in engineering or MBAs, are today Silicon's Valley's top entrepreneurs. And the global mobility of Indian students has increased phenomenally over the past decade, perhaps even more than Indian professionals and entrepreneurs.

According to the Unesco's institute of statistics' annual report on global trends in student mobility, which was released in May 2011, the number of international students around the world continued to rise sharply in 2009, the year when the impact of economic slowdown was causing tremors around the world, showing a 12% increase over the previous year at 3.43 million. While China remains

the leader in sending students overseas with 440,000 Chinese students studying abroad; India holds second position with around 300,000.

According to the recently released Open Doors report, which is published annually by the Institute of international Education (IIE) in partnership with the US dept of state's bureau of educational & cultural affairs, the number of Indian students enrolled in colleges and universities and colleges in the US in 2010-11, was 104,000. And though there was a marginal 1% decrease in the number over the previous academic year, students from India still form about 14% of all international students in the US and are second only to the Chinese.

So is the campus route the best option to go overseas? This is easily worth arguing in favour of. Consider some of the advantages – in most countries including America, Canada and now Australia, students who finish degree and above courses from recognised institutions, have leave to remain for at least a year (and in many cases more) to scout around for jobs. In the US, the sought after H1B work permit – a preferred option for skilled professionals, is now used in a very big way by Indian students who graduate from US colleges and then find jobs in the US. In fact, there are 20,000 H1B visas which have been set aside only for foreign students graduating from US institutions.

In the last couple of years, the appetite for overseas education is less because of various factors including global economic slowdown and the lack of employment after education, particularly in the West. Further, UK, a very popular study destination, has tightened immigration norms and made it impossible for students to remain in the country after studies to look for employment. Interestingly, the main education destinations around the world, including UK, are also aggressively looking at attracting more international students particularly from India and China in an effort to add to their export earnings. Reason enough for them to become more competitive.

The UK has recently tightened rules for international students including curbing the opportunities to work during study and bring in family members. Obviously these drastic changes will have a huge fall-out on the international student numbers in UK. An all-party parliamentary group in the country while highlighting the economic impact of these changes pointed out that "international students provide income opportunities beyond tuition fees."

The direct value of international students alone to the UK economy (including fees and off-campus spend) was calculated by the British Council in 2007

to amount to nearly £8.5 billion per year. Scotland's education minister Michael Russell, who was recently in India, believes that the post-study leave to remain route – which first started in UK as Scotland's Fresh Talent scheme – was important to tap the skills among international students.

Scotland, he highlighted, had around 4000 Indian students studying in colleges and universities and would like to make its own rules on student immigration instead of being forced to follow the larger UK system. Many universities in Scotland and elsewhere in UK are putting in place systems to help Indian students in finding jobs before their courses end in UK.

Besides, Indians students with an entrepreneurial idea too, will find it easier to remain in UK after they finish their studies. Australia, unlike UK, has good news for international students. Recent visa changes that came into effect recently mean that Indian students going to Australia will have to demonstrate less funding. Further, Australia is offering a 2-4 year post-study work period for university degree graduates which is not linked to any skills occupation list.

Obviously, the way forward for those choosing to go overseas for education will be to become more brand conscious and find cost-effective options. Further, at least a few years of work overseas - not just to recover the investment in the foreign degree - but also to gain foreign work experience is important. It's not just about getting an overseas degree but also about what the degree is worth afterwards in terms of global job opportunities that it will open up.

Source: November 30, 2011/Economic Times

Asia's students weigh up college options

Families in Asia desperate to get a college education for their children are considering a variety of expensive options - including sending them to a local branch of a British or Australian university.

"Emotionally it's very taxing," sighed Seema Singh, talking about the All India Engineering Entrance Exam (AIEEE), which more than one million young Indians sit each year.

"It's the hardest time in my life," she says. "Sometimes, I have palpitations." But Seema, 47, is not sitting the exam herself. She is worried for her son Ishan, 18.

She and her husband, who works in advertising in Delhi, are paying for extra coaching lessons for him, on top of his private school fees. He needs to

do well in the test to stand a chance of reading architecture in a state-subsidised university.

Across India, China and South East Asia, education is the key to being part of the story of economic growth. But competition for state-subsidised college places is now so tough that many families are considering the option of paying for an expensive degree abroad.

In India, technical subjects, especially engineering, are the most competitive. There are only 10,000 places at the prestigious Indian Institute of Technology (IITs), but last year almost half a million people tried to get in.

Ishan's parents are looking at the family budget and contemplating sending him abroad to college. The option is now so popular, with many families raising expensive loans or spending their life savings, that a new profession has sprung up to help them: the education consultant.

Some education consultants work on commission from foreign colleges, and others charge fees. Victoria D'Sa is a partner at Global Education Consultancy Services, which has offices across India and charges around 25,000 rupees ($550/£341) for its services.

"India is the best country for undergraduate programmes," she advises, "because the cost is less."

Rising costs

Those who get into the very best Indian colleges on merit alone will be able to get a world-class education for around 70,000 rupees ($1,500/£932) per year, she estimates, which explains the crushing competition for these places. Some colleges reserve places for lower caste students as well.

Places in popular courses such as engineering are keenly contested. But even at inexpensive state colleges, costs have risen in recent years. Some colleges now offer "management quotas" which allow hopeful students or their families to pay a fee in return for a place. D'Sa estimates this payment could add 500,000 rupees ($11,100/£6,900) to the cost of an education.

But even the cheapest foreign option, Singapore, would cost around that much for each year of study alone - and that is before flights, rent and food are factored in. Western nations cost even more, with the US being the most expensive.

The high cost is one reason the Singhs hope Ishan will stay in India - at least for his undergraduate studies. "It's the masters that makes the

difference," says his mother. "I would even think about having a loan for that."

"Asian families consider education a long-term investment and are willing to dig deep into their pockets to ensure their children get quality education"

At undergraduate level "you're basically financing their partying abroad," says Ishan's father M P Singh (his son interrupts him, joking: "That's fine with me").

Masters degree fees are around 800,000 to 1,500,000 rupees ($17,000 to $33,000/£10,570 to £20,530) in the UK or Australia, estimates consultant D'Sa - and even more in the USA.

But European countries such as Germany are less expensive, and some nations, such as Finland or Norway, may even give financial assistance to Indian students.

For families elsewhere in Asia, there's a half-way option. Jonathan Ong has spent the last three years studying engineering at a British institution, the University of Nottingham, without ever leaving his home town of Kuala Lumpur.

Cheaper option

Nottingham opened its Malaysia campus in 1999, and its Chinese branch in 2006. Across the region, European, US and Australian campuses are springing up, often charging lower fees than they would if you studied at their original campus.

"Having foreign universities based in Malaysia gives the rest, who are not so financially-blessed to be able to go abroad, an opportunity to attain UK or US education at a cheaper cost," says Mr Ong.

Asian families take the education of their children very seriously

Just like in India, state universities in Malaysia are competitive. They charge lower fees (often less than $1,000/£620 a year), but often have restrictive entry "quotas" - in this case, based on ethnicity rather than caste.

Quotas are one reason that Mr Ong, a blogger from Malaysia's Chinese minority, said he preferred to take a loan for 60% of his annual fees of 28,000 ringit ($9,300/£5,785) and study at the Nottingham campus.

He sees it as "quality education at a cheaper cost" and it has paid off - he has now started a career as a consultant.

Mr Ong says the costs may be high but that does not put people off. "Asian families consider

education a long-term investment and are willing to dig deep into their pockets to ensure their children get quality education," he says.

Source: November 30, 2011/BBC News

Schools of the future

The future of the world depends on a new change in schooling system, thus ushering in an era of sharing, caring and universal compassion—the true religion for the masses

"The highest education is that which does not merely give us information but makes our life in harmony with all existence." -- Rabindranath Tagore

Life is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as ceaseless change till death. "Anything that does not change does not come under the definition of science" wrote a federal judge in the US while delivering his judgment in a dispute between the Creationists and Scientists. Human life history is the story of the evolution of this Universe itself. If one wants to understand the nature of Nature one has just got to understand human nature which is a miniscule of this universe itself. We are obsessed with science today. The word science brings goose-pimples on many of us. Indian schools do not seem to have changed ever since the East India Company destroyed our ancient school system some time in the early 19th century. There have, of course, been some cosmetic changes in that schools today have become big corporate businesses and they have also got a bit of American flavor. However, the philosophy of feeding the young creative minds with useless dead information seems to be our goal. Rote learning for getting grades is the order of the day. Grades should make wealthy careers at the end of the day is the philosophy accepted by the greedy parents as also the powers that be in the educational system, and some of the powerful industrial honchos who see nothing wrong in education being a big business.

The vital part of education, which is to try and make healthy minds, is all but lost in this milieu. Our education, especially the primary one, which matters a lot, is, therefore, unscientific by definition, as it has not changed. The aforementioned federal judge would have declared our educational system as a religion, which I think it is slowly becoming by Karl Marx's opinion that a religion is the "opium of the people". The actual complete quote from 1843-44 Karl Marx's book Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right is more nuanced, though. Marx did not ridicule religion by this statement; rather he thought that religion is an extension of his own thinking. He goes on to say that: "To call on them to give up their illusions

about their condition is to call on them to give up a condition that requires illusions". That was in a way Marx's own opium in one sentence since the "human essence has not acquired any true reality". Yet instead of the crude opium reference there is that beautifully poetic conclusion "of that vale of tears of which religion is the halo". To call upon our present school system bosses to change would be exactly like what Marx felt about asking for change in his times. Spirituality—sharing and caring—is not only the essence of all religions but also the ageless wisdom of man, which has very little to do with ritualistic religions.

Science today tells us that the world began with the Big Bang. I wonder if there was a big bang or a small whimper! For 750 million long years, they say, that there was no life on earth. The first life came as a single cell which could do all that you and I can do today-breathe, eat, excrete, think, and work. That stage went on for more than a trillion and half years when these single cell individuals wisely thought that it is better to get together as a colony to work more efficiently with least expense. They had a fertile brain in their cell wall (membrane), called the memBrain by a famous cell biologist, Bruce Lipton. They could sense their environment through antennae in their cell walls, their brain, called Integral Membrane Proteins (IMPs). These could make the cells come alive to the environment (universal consciousness) to have own their individual consciousness. Figuratively life gets born then like your actors on the TV screen. When that antenna does not get the message (when you switch off your TV) life ebbs out just as the TV actor dies when the switch goes off. The consciousness gets into, may be another cell immediately after that- life again. So death is only a part of life and not its end! Thus the human body is a happy colony of 50 trillion individual cells.

Why did the single free-floating cells come together then? They, in their wisdom, realized that they are better off and stronger if they came together in larger groups as they could expand their individual consciousnesses many fold by increasing the IMPs exponentially! How wise of them? As time passed they realised that each one of them need not do all the work that needs to be done. They could share their responsibilities. Some cell groups inside the body became what we call today organs doing specific tasks more efficiently. But they did not lose sight of the fact that they were all functionally identical even when they morphologically different to fit that organ e.g. brain looking after overseeing the total function of locomotion, etc. In this new role they found that they could care for others better. Thus evolved the philosophy of spirituality—

sharing and caring! Body cells therefore love one another. This could be seen under the electron-microscope in disease conditions. In a fresh fracture site the red blood cells in the clot could gradually change to pluri-potent stem cells to heal the fracture eventually! Same cells but different work. These endogenous stem cells are our best doctors in all disease states.

Education, therefore, should teach the young mind that it is in sharing and caring that the world can go on for good. Our grading system, on the contrary, puts negative thoughts of greed, hatred, jealousy, anger and pride into that innocent, creative, loving, and compassionate mind of a child. Scientific studies have shown that if students in a class with varied levels of intelligence could be taught the principles of collective compassionate sharing efforts they all get high grades in the final examination! This is conducive to good health as well since body cells enjoy working together, anyway. Health is defined today as "enthusiasm to work and enthusiasm to be compassionate." Those who do not have either or both of those are really sick! In that definition society as a whole is becoming sick today with no compassion. Recent noise about "Wall Street" greed is but a sign of that universal sickness that is overtaking our present society; rather it is the corporate greed that would eventually destroy all God-given resources of nature. The root cause for this disease is the wrong type of primary education that turns a universally compassionate, creative, God-like child into a greedy, angry, proud man/woman who joins the rat race to acquire money, power and parking lots! The future of the world depends on a new change in schooling system, thus ushering in an era of sharing, caring and universal compassion—the true religion for the masses.

"*Education is not the amount of information that is put into your brain and runs riot there, undigested all your life. We must have life-building, man-making and character-making assimilation of ideas.*" -- Swami Vivekananda.

Source: November 30, 2011/Money life

RESOURCE

Fewer US students visit India

Despite touting to have a good English-speaking faculty and despite being the home ground of most silicon valley entrepreneurs, India fails to attract students from United States of America.

India stands at 14th place when it comes to number of US students going abroad for higher education.

However, the sub-continent ranks second as far students joining US educational institutions goes.

The US Institute of International Education recently released the Open Doors report, which is a comprehensive information resource on international students and scholars studying or teaching at higher education institutions in the United States, and U.S. students studying abroad for academic credit at their home colleges or universities.

Of the 2,70,604 US students going abroad for higher education only 3,884 came to India in 2009-10, an increase of 44.4 per cent over the previous year's figures. Countries like South Africa (13th rank — 4,313 students), Costa Rica (10th rank —- 6,262 students), Italy (2nd place — 27,940 students) and Mexico (8th rank —7,157 students) have attracted more US students than India.

However students from India, the second largest international segment in the United States, decreased by one percent to a total now of nearly 1.04 lakhs. While slightly declining in numbers, students from India still represent 14 percent of all international students in U.S. higher education.

Asked about his comments on the issue, Dr John E. Dooley, vice-president, Virginia Tech said it is because of lack of knowledge about the 21st century India among US students that the numbers are less.

"I think US students need to visit India and interact with universities here to prepare themselves to see the global market place. US students don't know India but they have learnt more about South Africa in the last decade as the football world cup in South Africa did a remarkable job to introduce the country to US students," he said.

Former Anna University vice-chancellor and member of state planning commission Prof. E. Balagurusamy recalled that a couple of years ago University Grants Commission (UGC) constituted a committee and conducted visit India programme but that did not yield any big results.

"Indian Universities don't offer different courses which the American students want to study and also the institutions don't provide proper accommodation and security. So I don't think we will get more US students. We should provide courses like study about Indian heritage, culture and temples which they would like to take up", he pointed out.

Source: November 22, 2011/Deccan chronicles

Indicus Analytics: Education scores low

Despite an increased enrolment rate, children?s learning capabilities remain dismally poor in rural India

India has made encouraging progress in raising schooling participation in recent years. Yet, as is well known, improvement in the quality of education remains a challenge. Though government data on education typically deals with outlays and quantitative indicators like enrolment ratios, the status of school infrastructure and so on, qualitative indicators are missing. To fill in this gap, a nationwide survey of children's reading and arithmetic capabilities in rural India is conducted every year by NGO Pratham. Given its scale and comprehensive coverage, the Annual Status of Education Report (Aser) is a path-breaking initiative, being the only Indian nationwide survey, albeit rural, which assesses the learning achievement of children between class I and VIII.

There are four basic tests of increasing difficulty to gauge arithmetic competence and students are asked to perform each only after clearing the lower level: recognition of randomly chosen numbers from one to nine, recognition of randomly chosen numbers between 11 to 99, subtraction of two-digit numerical problems with borrowing and division of three-digit by one-digit numerical problems.

The survey results in 2010 reveal the low standard of education in rural India — merely 37 per cent of the children in class III could recognise numbers up to 100. Furthermore, just 27 per cent of the students could reach the next level, that is, subtraction.

What is more worrying is that the proportion of children reaching the highest test level has consistently declined since 2005, when the survey was first conducted. At least 15 per cent of the children in class III in 2005 could perform all the tests, while in 2010 only nine per cent of the children could do so. Also, 67 per cent of the children in class VIII in 2010 could reach the highest level, while the corresponding figure in 2005 was 70 per cent. Clearly, pushing enrolment does not automatically translate into improved learning.(Click here for graph)

State-level data show wide disparity across India. For instance, in Kerala and Nagaland, 98 per cent of the children in classes I-II could recognise numbers, while less than 70 per cent of the children in Puducherry, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Bihar could do so. The capability of solving the higher tests of subtraction or more in classes III-V displays a wide variation from 84 per cent in Mizoram to a

mere 40 per cent in Uttar Pradesh. States like Mizoram, Kerala, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh and Sikkim are among the top five states in which more than 70 per cent of the surveyed children from class III to V could solve subtractions or more. At the other end of the table, in Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Assam, Gujarat, Daman & Diu and Rajasthan less than half of the surveyed children of the same standard could solve subtraction or more.

Several states have initiated various programmes to improve the level of learning. Yet in most cases, efforts have not translated into better learning. One exception is Punjab that has shown significant improvement in learning levels compared to the previous survey. The new policy of not keeping a child back till the Std VIII has to go hand in hand with ensuring that basic learning outcomes are achieved.

Source: November 24, 2011/ Indicus Analytics/Business Standard

Survey on Standard of Education in India

Pratham, an NGO has carried out a survey in 5 States viz. Andhra Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Assam, Jharkhand and Rajasthan with support from UNICEF and UNESCO. The study has noted that in the last two decades, impressive strides have been made in India in terms of providing school buildings, classrooms, teachers, textbooks and other facilities. These have been matched by very significant improvements in enrollment. The Annual Study Status of Education Report (ASER) study 'Inside Primary Schools" tracked 30,000 rural children in Std 2 and Std 4 in 900 schools spread over five States of Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand and Rajasthan.

The key recommendations emerging from this study are as below:-

(i) Textbooks need urgent revisions. They need to start from what children can do and be more realistic and developmentally appropriate in what children are expected to learn, with clear learning goals and sequence.

(ii) Systems must be put into place to track attendance, not just enrollment, and ensure regular reporting and monitoring of this attendance.

(iii) Mother tongue instruction and programmes for language transition need to be introduced and expanded.

(iv) Teacher recruitment policies need to assess teachers' knowledge, but more importantly their ability to explain content to children, make information relevant to their lives and use teaching learning materials and activities other than the textbook.

(v) State teacher education plans should invest in human resource capacity academic structure, like Block Resource Centres (BRCs) and Cluster Resource Centres structure, like Block Resource Centres (BRCs) and Cluster Resource Centres (CRCs) and District Institutes of Education and Training (DIET) to enable them to help improve teaching and learning quality via in-service training and classroom visits.

(vi) As per the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009, child-friendly education needs to be defined and measured regularly as apart of the indicators of quality education.

(vii) Libraries with take home books for reading practice at the household level, should be monitored as part of RTE indicators. Family reading programmes could also be part of innovations to help support first generation schools goers.

The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009 has become operative with effect from 1st April, 2010 and SSA norms have been revised to correspond with the provisions of RTE Act, 2009 in order to ensure quality elementary education to children of age group from 6-14 years throughout the country including these five States.

This information was given by Dr. D. Purandeswari, Minister of State for Human Resource in written reply to a question in Rajya Sabha on Friday.

Source: November 30, 2011/India Edu. News

No child's play

Twenty Years of CRC: A Balance Sheet" compiled by Bharti Ali takes stock of the progress made on the rights of children

Nearly 20 years after India ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), reiterating its constitutional commitment to the children of the nation, young boys and girls, unfortunately, do not seem to have benefitted as much as they could have. Child labour, both in hazardous factories in the smaller towns and as domestic workers in urban India, is rampant. Recently, a 500-plus page report on the progress made since the convention was set up was released by Supreme Court judge Justice Altamas Kabir, at the Constitution Club in New Delhi.

The report, titled "Twenty Years of CRC: A Balance Sheet", takes stock of the changes in the socio-economic, political and cultural context in the last two decades and makes an assessment of the progress made on implementation of the CRC commitments, gaps and challenges that remain and learnings that point to the way forward.

The report has been compiled by Bharti Ali, co-director of NGO HAQ - Centre for Child Rights. It took her nearly a year and a half to compile it. "The gains made since the ratification of the CRC are plenty, but the reality of children's situation is disturbing on many counts, calling for urgent and serious attention. This balance sheet is not to criticise the government but to present an assessment that needs to be made periodically to plan better," says Bharti.

Here are some facts presented by the report:

Birth registration

India's overall birth registration rate in 2007 was 74 per cent. The Office of the Registrar General of India (ORGI) admits that every year around 7.6 million out of 26.2 million newborns in India do not get registered. The worst performing states are reported to be Bihar, Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh with birth registration levels as low as 5.8, 7.1 and 9.1 per cent respectively.

Child marriage

According to the UNICEF India Country Office, although Punjab is one of India's wealthier States, the proportion of girls being married off before the legal age of 18 has dramatically increased over the past seven years, from 12 per cent in 1998-1999 to 19 per cent in 2005-2006. Yet the Crime in India statistics for 2009 recorded only three cases under the Prohibition of Child Marriages Act.

Early childhood care and education

For the first time in India's history, early childhood care and education was recognised as a distinct need in 2002 under Article 45 of the Constitution. According to the 2009-10 Annual Report of the Ministry of Women and Child Development, as on November 30, 2009, about 31,718 crèches were sanctioned, benefitting about 792,950 children. However, the requirement is of 800,000 crèches.

Education

The Eleventh Five Year Plan recognised that despite progress, 7.1 million children remain out of school. The 12th Five-Year Plan mantra is inclusive growth, but religion and caste remain a determining factor for enrolment as well as retention in school.

The Planning Commission notes that the social composition of out-of-school children indicates that 9.97 per cent of Muslim children, 9.54 per cent of Scheduled Tribes (STs), 8.17 per cent of Scheduled Castes (SCs), and 6.97 per cent of Other Backward Class (OBC) children were out of school and an overwhelming majority (68.7 per cent) was concentrated in five States — Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan.

Child labour

Child labour increased by 12.23 per cent between 1991 and 2001. Yet is does not figure in the Crime in India statistics. Some states, including Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra, reported reduction in child labour, whereas in other states, including Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, child labour increased between 29 percent and 39 per cent. The highest percentage rise of 91 per cent was in Himachal Pradesh.

Source: November 30, 2011/The Hindu

Mc Graw-Hill Research Foundation Policy Paper Addresses Growing Demand for a Skilled and Educated Global Workforce

Authors call on business and educational communities to collaborate to decrease widening skills gap; career and technical education viewed as solution

A policy paper released today by The McGraw-Hill Research Foundation calls for greater collaboration between the business and education communities to create a coordinated, institutionalized system that prepares the workforce of today and tomorrow for the demands of an increasingly high-tech and more competitive global economy.

In the paper, titled "Developing Human Capital: Meeting the Growing Global Need for a Skilled and Educated Workforce," authors Janet Bray, executive director of the Association for Career and Technical Education; Ron Painter, CEO of the National Association of Workforce Boards; and Mitch Rosin, director of adult education and workforce initiatives for McGraw-Hill Education, point out that the goals and accountability systems of business and education do not align – but can. The current lack of integration is a major barrier to creating a steady supply of employees who are well suited to succeed in the changing global job market, whether they work on the factory floor or in a C-suite.

"There has traditionally been a disconnect between the business people who create jobs and the education professionals who provide high school students and others with the knowledge and skills

they need to be successful employees," the authors observe.

For example, many of today's business leaders believe academia is not adequately producing highly skilled candidates with the three primary qualities they seek in new-hires:

- A global mindset – the ability to work in an international, multi-cultural society
- Systematic thinkers with problem-solving, higher-order analytical and collaborative skills, also known as "21st century skills"
- An appreciation for the needs and benefits of lifelong learning

Increasingly, employers are also looking for workers with industry-recognized credentials, and are far less concerned with the current gold standard measurements of success in education, such as course credits and seat time.

"Prospective employees must have a good education and marketable skills to survive in a borderless economy dependent on technology," the authors write, explaining that the global labor market has significantly changed in recent decades. Among other examples, manufacturing jobs are now outsourced to countries with the lowest employment costs, assembly line work requires a more specialized skill set such as an ability to solve problems and handle complex machinery, the construction industry and others are challenged by a lack of adequately trained technicians, and a bachelor's degree no longer guarantees job security or steady income growth.

The authors identify career and technical education (CTE) as one area where business and education already overlap and where additional emphasis needs to be placed. "The U.S. and other developed nations need to devote more resources to career and technical education – not just for young people still in school, but even more critically for adults who face barriers to employment due to lack of formal education, English language or other skills."

CTE is important for another reason: earning potential. Recent data suggest that technical credentials have the potential to outpace the wages of bachelor's degree holders as well as those with just a high school diploma.

In the United States, the Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts that 71 percent of "growth" jobs through 2016 will require postsecondary credentials. However, some 88 million U.S. adults have at least one major educational barrier to employment, only about 30 percent of people 25 to 34 years of age

graduate college, and approximately one million high school students drop out each year.

Other parts of the world are being more responsive to the changing global job market, the authors note. The Indian government, for example, has provided capital funding to train 150 million workers by the year 2022. Several European countries have also established technical education initiatives to improve their citizens' vocational qualifications, and studies of their on-the-job training programs have shown them to be more effective than classroom instruction. A question remains, the authors note – Why hasn't the United States conducted the same analysis or made capital investment in its own labor force?

The authors propose several opportunities to remedy the disconnect between employer and education needs:

• **The National Association of Workforce Boards** can: secure more proactive leadership from the business community and widely promote the idea that technical careers are in demand, offer a secure and meaningful future, and require postsecondary training but not a bachelor's degree.

• **The Association of Career and Technical Education** can: reform career guidance protocols to reflect labor market needs and ensure CTE teachers and trainers are well prepared with on-the-ground industry experience.

• **The Business Roundtable** comprising top CEOs can: help impact federal policy by ensuring a sustained investment in math and science education and promote a Race to the Top competition for two- and four-year colleges that focuses on completion rates and attainment of credentials valued by employers.

• **The Center for Law and Social Policy** can: call on Congress to strengthen the Workforce Investment Act to increase regional productivity and competitiveness and provide high-quality job training and education that result in employer-recognized credentials and lead to family-supporting wages and benefits.

The authors believe that "close cooperation and a real, ongoing partnership" between education and business must continue – and accelerate – to abate the current and projected skills gap and stimulate global economic growth.

Source: November 30, 2011/The Sacramento Bee-PR News Wire

Contribute

If you are an academician, a researcher, an investigator or a thinker then, Apeejay Stya Education Research Foundation invites you to send your inputs by way of your opinion, information, suggestions and experiences in the field of education.

Researchers are also invited to send in their published documents so that they can be hosted on this site.

Please email your contributions to aserf@apeejay.edu

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