APEEJAY STYA EDUCATION RESEARCH FOUNDATION

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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 2012. Click here to download the prescribed format along with the terms and conditions.

Apeejay Stya University announces admission for the session 2012

Apeejay Stya University is offering diverse catalogue of technical, scientific, management and liberal arts courses for the Fall Admission 2012-13. 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

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

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Svrán Group

ASPECT

India's Education Sector: Moving Toward a Digital Future

The typical Indian classroom was once characterized by students sitting through hour-long teacher monologues. Now, technology is making life easier for both students and educators. Schools are increasingly adopting digital teaching solutions to engage with a generation of pupils well-versed with the likes of PlayStations and iPads, and trying to make the classroom environment more inclusive and participatory.

Take Smartclass from Educomp Solutions, one of the first Indian companies in this space. Smartclass is essentially a digital content library of curriculum-mapped, multimedia-rich, 3D content. It also enables teachers to quickly assess how much of a particular lesson students have been able to assimilate during the class. Once a topic is covered, the teacher gives the class a set of questions on a large screen. Each student then answers via a personal answering device or the smart assessment system. The teacher gets the scores right away and based on that, she repeats parts of the lesson that the students don't appear to have grasped.

"Technology makes the teaching-learning process very easy and interesting," says Harish Arora, a chemistry teacher at the Bal Bharti Public School in New Delhi who has been using Smartclass since 2004. "For instance, [earlier] it would easily take me one full lecture to just draw an electromagnetic cell on the blackboard. Though I could explain the cell structure, there was no way I could have managed to show them how it really functions. This is where technology comes to our aid -- now I can show the students a 3D model of the cell and how it functions. Instead of wasting precious time drawing the diagram on the blackboard, I can invest it in building the conceptual clarity of my students."

According to Abhinav Dhar, director for K-12 at Educomp Solutions, more than 12,000 schools across 560 districts in India have adopted Smartclass. More importantly, the number is growing at almost 20 schools a day. On average, in each of these schools eight classrooms are using Smartclass.

"When we launched Smartclass in 2004 as the first-ever digital classroom program, it was an uphill task convincing schools to adopt it," Dhar notes. "These schools had not witnessed any change in a century.... It is a completely different scenario now. Private schools across India today see [technology] as an imperative. A digital classroom is set to become the bare-minimum teaching accessory in schools, just like a blackboard is today."

Dhar recalls that one major roadblock for Educomp's proposition in the early days was on the price front. At US$4,000 (at the exchange rate of Rs. 50 to a U.S. dollar) per classroom, schools found the product very expensive. To get over this hurdle, Educomp quickly decided to make the initial investment and gave the schools an option to pay over a period of three to five years. The strategy worked. Enthused by the market response, in January Educomp launched an upgraded version -- the Smartclass Class Transformation System -- with more features, including simulations, mind maps, worksheets, web links, a diagram maker, graphic organizers and assessment tools.

Huge Potential

According to the "Indian Education Sector Outlook -- Insights on Schooling Segment," a report released by New Delhi--based research and consultancy firm Technopak Advisors in May, the total number of schools in India stands at 1.3 million. Of these, private schools account for 20%. Educomp's Dhar points out that only around 10% of the private schools have tapped the potential of multimedia classroom teaching whereas in government schools, it has barely made any inroads.

"The current market size for digitized school products in private schools is around US$500 million," says Enayet Kabir, associate director for education at Technopak. "This is expected to grow at a CAGR [compound annual growth rate] of 20% to reach the over US$2 billion mark by 2020. However, the market potential then might get as big as US$4 billion [i.e. if the total population of private schools that could adopt multimedia actually adopt it.] Apart from this, the current market size for ICT [information and communications technology] in government schools is US$750 million. We expect this to grow five times by 2020 due to the current low level of penetration in government schools."

Kabir lists Educomp Solutions, Everonn Education, NIIT, Core Education & Technologies, IL&FS and Compucom as dominant players in this sector. New entrants include HCL Infosystems, Learn Next, Tata Interactive Systems, Mexus Education, S. Chand Harcourt (India) and iDiscoveri Education. Except for S. Chand Harcourt, which is a joint venture between S. Chand and US-based Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, all the others are Indian firms.

A recent trend is that schools in tier two and tier three cities are increasingly adopting the latest

technology. Rajesh Shethia, head of sales and marketing at Tata Interactive Systems, which launched Tata ClassEdge in early 2011 and has partnered up with more than 900 schools, says that "more than half of the demand for digital classrooms is from tier two and tier three cities." According to Shethia, schools in these smaller cities realize that it is difficult for their students to get as much exposure as students from tier one cities. "[So] they proactively subscribe to solutions such as ours, which richly benefit both teachers and students by simplifying the syllabus.... Even parents want the best for their wards and are not averse to paying a little extra. They see value in these initiatives by schools to modernize the way teaching is imparted today." Making some back-of-the-envelope calculations Shethia adds: "If we consider the top 100,000 private schools in India as the captive market, the potential is approximately two million classrooms of which currently just about 80,000 have been digitized."

Srikanth B. Iyer, COO of Pearson Education Services, also sees tremendous potential in the smaller cities. Pearson provides end-to-end education solutions in the K-12 segment. Its multimedia tool, DigitALly, has been adopted in more than 3,000 private schools across India since 2004. "DigitALly installations have been growing at three times the market for the past two years," Iyer says. "Currently, more than 60% of our customers are from tier two and tier three towns, such as Barpeta (in the state of Assam), Sohagpur (in Madhya Pradesh) and Balia (in Uttar Pradesh)."

In order to make its offering attractive to the schools, Pearson has devised a monthly payment model under which a school pays around US$2 per student per month. "As the price point is affordable, schools across all locations and fee structures find it viable to opt for our solution," Iyer notes. "We focus on tier two and tier three towns and cities where penetration is relatively low and desire for adoption of technology is high." HCL's Digischool program, which launched about 18 months ago, has also made a strong beginning, with a client base of more than 2,500 schools.

Partnering with State Governments

Meanwhile, state governments are also giving a boost to the adoption of technology in schools. Edureach, a divison of Educomp, has partnered with 16 state governments and more than 30 education departments and boards in the country, covering over 36,000 government schools and reaching out to more than 10.60 million students. "Edureach leads the market with 27% of the total schools where ICT projects have been implemented," says Soumya Kanti, president of Edureach. "We are looking [to add] 3,000 more schools this fiscal year and 20,000 to 25,000 additional schools in the next five years." As of now, Edureach has created digital learning content in more than 14 regional languages for these projects.

In the northern state of Haryana, CORE Education and Technologies is implementing a US$59 million ICT project that aims to benefit 5 million students across 2,622 schools. Five of these schools will be developed as "Smart" schools. CORE is also implementing ICT projects in the states of Gujarat, Meghalaya, Punjab, Maharashtra and Nagaland. The scope of work in these projects ranges from implementation of computer-aided learning in schools, installing bio-metric devices to monitor attendance of teachers, and setting up computer hardware, software and other allied accessories and equipments.

"The task has not been an easy one," admits Anshul Sonak, president of CORE. "There are several logistical issues. Delivery of equipment to rural areas is a big challenge in itself.... There is lack of basic infrastructure -- either there are no classrooms or there are ones with no windows.... Some schools don't even have toilets. Moreover, the power availability in these areas is often poor and we have had to deploy generator sets in many schools."

But despite the challenges, educationists are optimistic. Rahul De, professor of quantitative methods and information systems area at the Indian Institute of Management in Bangalore (IIM-B) believes that "ICT can have a huge impact on our education system." He points out that ICT can result in increasing the reach [of education] and in keeping the costs low. "With increasing penetration of mobile phones and Internet kiosks, the potential is indeed immense," he adds.

A study conducted by De in 2009 on the economic impact of free and open source software (FOSS) in India found that it resulted in significant cost savings. "FOSS can play a huge role in education," De notes. "In the state of Kerala, it has already had a huge impact in both saving costs and providing state-of-the-art access computing to students in government schools. FOSS has a huge number of packages for school students, many of which can be ported to local languages and used in schools. It is also helping disabled students in a big way, by enabling them to access digital resources using audio-visual aids."

Edureach's Kanti adds that a study by the Centre for Multi-Disciplinary Development Research in Dharwad in Karnataka in 2006 revealed significant improvement in student enrolment and attendance,

as well as a reduction of student dropouts due to ICT interventions. "Yet another study conducted by the Xavier Institute of Management in Bhubaneswar in 2007 revealed that computer-aided education has improved the performance of children in subjects such as English, mathematics and science, which are taught through computers using multimedia-based educational content."

All in a Tab

In line with this increasing interest in technology for school education, there has been a rush of education-focused tablet computers in the market. The most high-profile of these has been Aakash, which was launched by Kapil Sibal, union minister for human resource development, in October 2011. The Aakash project is part of the ministry's National Mission on Education through Information & Communication Technology (NME-ICT). It aims to eliminate digital illiteracy by distributing the Aakash tablets to students across India at subsidized rates. While the project itself has become mired in delays and controversy, it has generated a lot of awareness and interest among students around the educational tablet.

Meanwhile, DataWind, the Canada-based firm that partnered with the union government for the Aakash project, has also launched UbiSlate7, the commercial version of Aakash. "The opportunity for low-cost tablets in India is huge. In the next two years, it will exceed the size of the computer market in India i.e. 10 million units per year," says Suneet Singh Tuli, president and CEO of DataWind.

In April, technology firm HCL Infosystems launched the MyEdu Tab, which is priced at around US$230 for the K-12 version. The device comes preloaded with educational applications and also books from the National Council of Educational Research and Training, a government organization. Anand Ekambaram, senior vice-president and head of learning at HCL Infosystems, is in the process of partnering with more than 30 educational institutes across India for MyEdu Tab. "MyEdu Tab has content offline and can be accessed over the cloud. It allows students to learn at their own pace," Ekambaram notes. "With a topic revision application and a self-assessment engine, students can evaluate their skills and knowledge on their own. Teachers can upload content, which can be accessed by students and parents for tasks such as homework and progress reports on their respective devices. The parent can monitor the progress of his or her child through the cloud-based ecosystem."

Earlier this year, Micromax, a leading Indian handset manufacturer, also launched an edutainment device called Funbook. Micromax has also partnered with Pearson and Everonn to make available relevant content for students. Susha John, director and CEO at Everonn, was upbeat at the launch. "Digital learning facilitated through tablets will revolutionize the educational space," John said. "Everonn has invested in developing content and services targeted toward tablet audiences. To start with, we will offer our school curriculum-learning modules ... and at home live tuition products on the Funbook. Students can now have access to good teachers, educational content and a great learning experience anytime, anywhere."

At Pearson, Max Gabriel, senior vice-president and chief technology officer, is "focusing on K-12 content in English to begin with. We are sitting on a huge repository of existing content. Adding the right level of interactivity and richer experience will be our priority." Meanwhile, Educomp is gearing up to launch content that is device agnostic and can be run on any tablet.

But even as schools in India are going through this transformation powered by technology, one key question is how big a role technology will play in the education sector. In an earlier interview with India Knowledge@Wharton, S. Sadagopan, founder-director at the International Institute of Information Technology in Bangalore, pointed out that there are four parts to learning -- lectures, library, laboratory and life -- noting that, "Technology plays a critical role in all these." Kabir of Technopak adds another perspective. "Despite numerous studies on the impact of ICT in education, the outcomes remain difficult to measure and open to much debate. It needs to be understood that technology is only an enabler and a force multiplier and cannot be treated as a panacea. We believe that impressive gains in teaching-learning outcomes are possible only through an integrated approach rather than a piecemeal intervention."

Don Huesman, managing director of Wharton's innovation group, recommends caution in considering potential investments in educational technologies. "These are very exciting times for online and distance education technologies, but there are risks facing parents, educators and policy makers in evaluating the opportunities these new technologies, and their proponents, represent."

Huesman points to the recent growth in high-quality, free, online educational courseware offered on websites like the Khan Academy and the Math Forum, as well as the work of the Open Learning Initiative in developing intelligent cognitive tutors and learning analytics. "But such technologies, available from a global network of resources, only provide value when understood, chosen and

integrated into a local educational community," he says. As an illustration, Huesman offers the example of cyber kiosks, provided in recent years by foundations at no cost to rural communities in India, exacerbating the "gender divide" in many traditional communities in which young women congregating at public cyber cafes, also frequented by young men, would be considered taboo. "Interventions by governments and NGOs must be inclusive of local community concerns and aware of local political complications," Huesman notes.

Source: 19 July, 2012/ India Knowledge Wharton

NEWS

State Bank Of India & HSBC Helps In Education Loan

Other than the well known HDFC and Axis banksthere are options of other banks where you can try for an Education Loan. Yes! The State Bank of India and HSBC Banks are also helpful in providing a Education Loan. Here are a few details on these banks you can look for.

SBI (State Bank of India) :All students applying for their higher studies eligible to be funded by the SBI Education Loans. The bank has no upfront charges. Current interest rate is 11 to 13.75% per annum. SBI also provided special loans for girl candidates.

The financial support provided by SBI is been very helpful for the needy candidates. For studies in India the maximum loan amount is Rs. 10 lakhs, while it is Rs. 20 lakhs for studies in abroad. The repayment perio is up-to seven years. No security is needed for amount less than Rs. 4 lakhs.

Student speak:A student named Karthick Mathew a B.A English student at Oxford University says "My friends approached private banks but I decided to take a loan from SBI because there are many concessions you can avail of only at Public banks".

Procedure to apply:Applicants must be an Indian nationals and have already been granted admission to an institute of higher education. Students seeking vocational training and diplomas in India and Job oriented professional courses abroad are also eligible for loans in SVI.

Besides from academic documents and a completed application form, all loans taken must be secured by parents, guardians or spouse. The bank is extremely stringent when it comes to the format of documents submitted. Please be sure to check ahead before submitting your final loan application. For more details please click here on State Bank of India.

HSBC Bank: This bank is in partnership with Global Student Loan Corporation, which aims to provide loans for Indian students. The present interest rate is around 12% per annum with respect to the total amount applied for.

Loans up-to Rs. 1 crore are provided against residential property. The property must be in cities like Ahmedabad, Bangalore, Chandigarh, Chennai, Mumbai, NCR Region, Jaipur or Pune. Rs 5 lkahs is the minimum amount offered by HSBC.

Students speak :Prashant Singh, who is a B.A Physics stduent at Melbourne University says "The service is what blew me away. I went to 2 other banks prior to HSBC but their loan representatives were so unenthusiastic. HSBC was quite different, with good knowledge and offers.

How to Apply:The minimum age for primary and co-applicants is 18 years, while the maximum age is 60years. Eligible candidates need to provide relevant documentation, collateral and application forms in order for the loan amount to be granted. Co-applicants can only be parents or spouses for Indian nationals. It is vital to provide official documentation from the university stating expected tuition, lodging, food, books and transport costs.

The loan amount granted will be in Indian rupees over the course of applicant's academic career. For more details please click on HSBC Bank.

Source: July 16, 2012/ Education on India

Mathematics through technology

The Ramanujan Foundation for Initiatives in Mathematics Education (RFIME) recently organised a conference in the Capital for mathematics teachers, titled Enabling Mathematics Learning through Technology . The conference was inaugurated by Vineet Joshi, chairman, Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE). The inaugural function was facilitated by Shayama Chona, chairperson RFIME. Jonaki B Ghosh, the conference convener, introduced the theme of the conference by emphasising the role of technology in making mathematics learning meaningful. Eminent mathematicians such as R Ramanujam, Institute of Mathematical Sciences Chennai; Shailesh Shirali, Community Math Centre, Rishi Valley School and Inder K Rana, IIT Powai, Mumbai, were the plenary speakers of the conference and delivered talks on various aspects related to mathematics education and the use of technology in teaching mathematics. While Ramanujam talked about 'Mapping the School Mathematics Curriculum' that focused on the logical and pedagogical structure of the curriculum , Shailesh Shirali talked about the role of technology in facilitating experimentation and discovery in the mathematics classroom.

Rana spoke about making mathematics learning more relevant through real-world problems. The conference also deliberated on various issues related to integration of technology in mathematics instruction and provided participants with hands-on experience in using some technology tools for teaching mathematics. 120 teachers from schools across Delhi and NCR participated in the conference.

Source: July 16, 2012/ Times of India

Central Board of Secondary Education plans flexible assessment

CBSE has planned to discontinue the publication of blue prints and marking schemes in all major subjects (classes IX-X) from the Summative Assessment-II of this academic session. Vishakha Sharma reports

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) that used to issue blue prints, sample question papers and marking schemes in all major subjects for classes IX and X to provide a model template to serve as a guide for entailing uniformity in assessment, proper coverage of the curricula and validity (and therefore reliability) of assessment has decided to put an end to this practice.

According to Vineet Joshi, chairman , CBSE, the board decided to discontinue with this process after noticing that a large section of students and examiners punctiliously follow these documents, which results in precluding open-ended approach and diversity in expression, style and content. The blue print further micro-categorises items into difficult , average and easy with specific allotment of marks to each category , which again limits the framing of a particular type of question from a particular topic/chapter. Moreover, the release of blue prints and the sample question papers indirectly promotes teaching to the test.

"In order to address the above issues and to further discourage the practice of 'teaching to the test,' the board has decided to discontinue the practice of providing blue print, sample question papers and marking schemes in classes IX and X with effect from Summative Assessment-II (SA-II) of 2012-13 ," says Joshi.

The weightings in the revised format will be assigned to entire units as mentioned in the curriculum as an alternative of chapter wise weighting given earlier.

There will be a more flexible design or structure of assessment instead of a detailed blue print, which used to divide the curriculum into exceedingly narrower parts.

The SA-II , which will be held in March 2013, will not be based on blue prints and sample questions papers and will rather follow a more comprehensive structure of examination and flexible patterns.

The structure of examination along with unit wise weighting for English, Hindi, Sanskrit, mathematics , science and social science together with pools of exemplar items will be shortly available on the academic websites of CBSE (www.cbseacademic .in) and will also be circulated to all the schools affiliated to the board.

Source: July 16, 2012/ Times of India

Tech institutes to have grievance redressal body

Students of technical institutes will now have a platform to address their grievances.

With a view to rising confrontations between students and management, the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) has directed all universities and colleges to appoint an ombudsman and a grievance redressal committee.

The institutes feel a great need for a grievance redressal cell in times of turmoil.

"The committee and ombudsman have assigned powers to investigate complaints. Students will also be able to register complaints against their own institute/university," said the directive.

The issues like conducting examinations, declaring results, sexual harassment, disputes among students and management will dealt with by the cell. These cells will have to address the complaints within a stipulated period of seven days.

If the college fails to address the problem the same will be sent to the ombudsman.

"Though I have not received any letter in person but I have checked it online. RTU will seek compliance on the report at the earliest," said RP Yadav, vice chancellor, RTU.

The move will help the state's growing technical education to get away from various law and order situations. For instance:

This year a student of Amity University were stabbed to death by three other students followed by violent protest by students. This happens due

Every institution must maintain a registry in which a student can record a complaint.

When a complaint is received the ombudsman must seek an explanation from the institution concerned within seven days and conduct proceedings and dispose of the case within a month.

Source: July 17, 2012/ Times of India

Relaxation of condition relating to enhancement of age of superannuation of teachers in state institutions consequent of the implementation of the revised pay scales on the basis of 6lh Pay Commission recommendations

The Cabinet today approved the proposal to relax the condition of enhancement of age of superannuation of teachers to 65 in state institutions for the implementation of the revised pay scales on the basis of 6th Pay Commission recommendations and become eligible for receiving Central share of 80% of the arrear payment.

It also decided that reimbursement of 80% of the Central share of the arrears be paid in 2-3 installments to those States who have already made the payment and submitted their proposals for reimbursements to the Central Government.

The decision of Cabinet is expected to provide relief to teachers in State institutions with the payment of arrears. It will also benefit State Governments, who will be able to make the arrear payment in installments and also claim reimbursements simultaneously.

Background:

Following the revision of pay scales of Central Government employees on the recommendation of the 6th Pay Commission, the pay scales of teachers and other equivalent cadres was revised and age of superannuation was enhanced to 65 in December 2008. The scheme of revised pay scales was essentially for teachers in Central Educational Institutions. However, provisions of the Scheme could be made applicable by State Governments, to Universities and Colleges coming under the purview of the State Governments, provided the State Governments adopt and implement the scheme as a composite scheme, including the enhanced age of superannuation.

The Central Government decided to provide financial assistance to the extent of 80% as reimbursement to those State Governments, which may opt for these revised pay scales for the period 1.1 2006 to 31.3.2010 The remaining 20% was to be met by the State Government from its own resources. The Central assistance was subject to the condition relating to the enhancement of the age of superannuation of university and college teachers to 65 years.

Many State Governments had requested the Central Government to waive the condition relating to enhancement of age of superannuation of teachers to 65 years as they were finding it difficult to accept the condition relating to enhancement of age of superannuation and the condition that the State Governments should first disburse the arrears and then seek reimbursement from Central Government to the extent of 80% of these arrears.

Source: July 20, 2012/PIB

Shri Kapil Sibal Launches NIOS's Mukta Vidya Vani

Mukta Vidya Vani, a pioneering initiative of the National Institute of Open Schooling, (NIOS) for using Streaming Audio for educational purposes, was inaugurated by the Union Minister of Human Resource Development, Sh. Kapil Sibal , on the occasion of the 22nd General Body Meeting of the NOS Society held here yesterday. Mukta Vidya Vani on the World WideWeb is a modern interactive, participatory and cost effective programme, involving an academic perspective along with the technical responsibilities of production of audio and video programmes, which are one of the most important components of the multi channel package offered by the NIOS. This will enable a two way communication with any audience having access to an internet connection, from the NIOS studio situated at its Headquarters in NOIDA.

The new NIOS website which has been designed in such a way that it not only meets the needs of its learners but is also disabled-friendly, was also launched on the occasion.

An MoU was also signed between the NIOS and the National Informatics Centre (NIC) with the objective of developing skill-based courses on web designing in accordance with the guidelines for Indian government websites. This will provide vertical and lateral mobility of learners from the school level in the web designing course.

Addressing the gathering, Dr.S.S.Jena, Chairman, NIOS mentioned 1127 learners had qualified for counseling in AIEEE and 267 qualified for counseling in B.Arch and 9 learners qualified for counseling in the AIPMT exam from the NIOS.

Source: July 20, 2012/PIB

CBSE Bill likely to be tabled in upcoming Parliament session

A bill seeking to make CBSE a statutory body is expected to be tabled in Monsoon Session of Parliament even as HRD Minister Kapil Sibal has started meeting Opposition leaders over other pending legislations related to reforms in higher education.

The passage of the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) Bill will give the Board more administrative and financial autonomy and widen its functioning.

The statutory status will enable CBSE to take its own decisions through its board of governors. Besides, its orders will have stringent implications after it becomes a statutory body, officials said.

At present, CBSE is a registered as a society, conducting board exams in its affiliated schools. It functions directly under the HRD Ministry and takes decision in consultation with the ministry on all important issues.

The move to introduce the Bill comes even as Sibal faces a big challenge for passage of over eight key legislations on higher education which are pending in Parliament.

Sources said he has already met senior BJP leaders like Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Sushma Swaraj as well as Arun Jaitley recently.

Some of the key bills including the Educational Tribunals Bill, the Higher Education and Research Bill, the Prohibition of Unfair Practices in Technical Educational Institutions, Medical Educational Institutions and Universities Bill, the Foreign Education Bill, the National Accreditation Regulatory Authority Bill are among those to be passed.

The crucial Educational Tribunals Bill, 2010 has been passed by Lok Sabha but is pending in the Upper House for almost a year now.

This Bill along with the Prohibition of Unfair Practices Bill and the National Accreditation Regulatory Authority Bill are inter-twined with each other, each giving strength to the other.

Sibal, who has expressed concern over delay in enactment of the Bills on several occasions, had met leaders of UPA allies besides the Opposition camp ahead of the Budget Session to evolve a consensus on these legislations. MPs, including those from ruling Congress, have raised doubts over certain provisions of the key Bills which have led to their deferment.

The Budget Session, though, proved to be an eventful one for the HRD Ministry as about six Bills were passed. The Universities for Research and Innovation Bill, 2012 was introduced during the fag end of the Budget Session.

Source: July 22, 2012/ Indian Express

HRD makes ombudsman mandatory in technical institutions

Every technical institution in the country, approved or recognised by the All-India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), will have to provide for an ombudsman, as part of its grievance redressal mechanism.

The grievance could include those related with the standards of education, irregularity in the admission process adopted by the institute, refusing admission in accordance with the declared admission policy, withholding or refusing to return any document, and demanding money in excess of that specified in the declared admission policy.

According to the All-India Council for Technical Education (Establishment of Mechanism for Grievance Redressal) Regulations, 2012, issued by AICTE, each technical university shall appoint an ombudsman whose order would be mandatory, and failure of compliance could lead to withdrawal of AICTE approval and withdrawal of grants or financial assistance from the Council.

The regulations have been issued even as two Bills related to curbing malpractices — Prohibition of Unfair Practices in Technical, Medical Educational Institutions and Universities Bill that seeks to make educational malpractices like charging capitation fee, and overpricing of prospectus a criminal offence — and the Educational Tribunals Bill for dispute redressal — are pending in Parliament.

The ombudsman, who would be a retired judge, not below the rank of a District Judge, or a retired professor who has at least 10 years of experience, can also recommend the affiliating university for withdrawal or affiliation or withdrawal of status as a university of a Technical university, if established under a State Act.

The ombudsman will also hear the complaints of alleged discrimination by students from Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, OBC, women, and minority or disabled categories. Harassment and victimisation of students, including sexual harassment, will also fall under the purview of the ombudsman.

However, no application for revaluation or remarking of answer sheets shall be entertained by the ombudsman.

S. Vaidhyasubramaniam, Dean (Planning and Development) of Sastra University, said the proposed ombudsman regulation seems to be a backdoor entry, as the two Bills related to it are still pending in the Parliament.

Source: July 22, 2012/ The Hindu

Most corrupt in India in top positions

A seminar was organized in Chandigarh on Saturday by the Centre for Legislative Studies, Chandigarh, on the topic 'Nationalist Movement in India - Challenges and Solutions'.

Speaking on the occasion, member of the central executive committee of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), Indresh Kumar, pointed out that the

most corrupt people in India are seated at the highest positions in India's legislature. Kumar, the main speaker of the seminar, touched upon various national issues such as female foeticide, higher education, national identity, secularism and India's relations with its neighbours, all of which he said make up the nationalist movements in India. He also said that it is undemocratic and non-secular to refer to the head of the state as 'rashtrapati'.

With regard to identity, Kumar said, "It is a fact that one's identity is related to one's nation alone". He added that the controversial area in Kashmir should be called 'Pakistan Occupied India' and that calling it Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK) is an "attempt to rape the country".

Talking about higher education courses like MBA, CA and CS, Kumar said that they teach students how to 'represent illegal accounts legally' and that they should not be encouraged. Kumar condemned the increasing number of female foeticide cases, especially in Haryana, saying that it is immoral to kill those who give us life.

Member of the Rajya Sabha Tarun Vijay also spoke at the event. "Unfortunately, the successive Congress governments in the country have not been able to give a positive direction to the people for moving towards a homogenous nation," he said. He said that because of narrow political considerations, the party has only divided people on the basis of caste and religion by giving a totally distorted version of the word "secularism".

The seminar was also attended by Pravesh Khanna, General Secretary, Forum for Integrated National Security and Satya Pal Jain, former Member of Parliament.

Source: July 22, 2012/ Indian Express

'More Indian students can opt for research in US'

More Indian students can take up research and higher education in the US with opportunities opening up, the US's consul general Peter Haas said on Tuesday.

More than one lakh Indian students are studying in various US universities, the second highest after China, he added. He was speaking at a special session organized by the Maharashtra Cosmopolitan Education Society on US Education. Vice consul Joy Peters, cultural affairs officer Angela Gemza and representative of US-India educational foundation (USIEF) Ryan Pereira were also present. The programme focused on procedures and education and visa formalities that students would want to know.

Haas said education opportunities in the US were increasing. "The US is a preferred destination for Indian students going abroad for higher studies. They can look for opportunities in fields of research and higher studies. Besides, there are student exchange, faculty exchange and scholarship programmes. India and the US are cooperating to develop good ties in the field of education," he said.

Students should begin planning well in advance so that they find a suitable course and the right university, he said. They should consider factors including course structure and its orientation and the fees while deciding the programme.

To find out accurate, comprehensive and unbiased information the students should also gather relevant information about their visa through authorised mediums and websites. This will help students to avoid any technical problems in the later stages, he said.

President of Maharashtra Cosmopolitan Education Society P A Inamdar said students should concentrate on research and pursue higher education.

Source: July 25, 2012/The Indian Express

Most state engineering colleges in Rajasthan fail to get students

Technical education in the state has again received a setback as engineering colleges failed to fill 100% seats this session. The first counseling ending on Saturday has left 30,000 seats vacant, the highest since inception of the Rajasthan Technical University (RTU) in 2005.

Many eligible candidates, who have cleared RPET entrance exam, had given a miss to the first counseling sessions held for admissions in the engineering colleges affiliated with RTU. About 75,000 students were declared eligible for admission in 54,000 seats of 150 engineering colleges in the state.

Only, 24,000 students had appeared in the counseling leaving a big survival question for many of engineering colleges. There is little hope left as the second and third counseling had always been a failure to attract students," an admission official said.

The situation this year is so bad that about 30 colleges had not even touched the second digit in terms of admissions. Off the total colleges, only eight including five in Jaipur, are lucky enough to register the magical figure of 100% admissions.

"I am shocked by the response. But it was expected considering the previous years responses. It has primarily nothing to do with quality but with the

demand and supply mechanism," said R P Yadav, vice-chancellor of RTU.

The poor response will leave many colleges to declare 'zero session' again this year. The management of these colleges has failed to understand the disinterest of students against these colleges.

This situation has sent jitters to the upcoming educational institutes. Since 2007, the technical education institutes had seen a growth of 30% each year. This year, the department of technical education had granted permission to 20 new management colleges and 50 engineering colleges, including 24 evening colleges.

Notably, a vacant college amounts to waste of government land, which is given to institutes at cheaper rates. Yadav feels that the government should have allowed engineering and management colleges to come up in the small towns and cities.

Most of the students who go to other states for higher education complaint that the state technical university doesn't offer branches which are very popular in the market like aviation, nano technology, automobile and petroleum among others. For management, barring a few colleges, the rest of them fail to give corporate environment necessary for their growth, the students said.

Source: July 25, 2012/Times of India

Shri Kapil Sibal Launches Anti-Ragging Web-Portal

Minister of Human Resource Development inaugurated the Anti-Ragging Web Portal here today. The portal has been developed by the University Grants Commission (UGC) in collaboration with Ed.CIL (India) Ltd. and Planet E-Com Solutions.

The Hon'ble Supreme Court in its judgment dated 8th May, 2009, while expressing great concern on the increasing incidences of ragging in educational institutions in the country ordered implementation of a ragging prevention programme comprising, inter-alia, setting up Toll-free Anti-Ragging Helpline /Call Centre, Database of institutions/students, engaging an independent non-government agency.

Pursuant to these directions, the government has taken various measures which includes regulation by UGC to curb ragging and similar regulations by other regulatory bodies, set up toll-free anti-ragging helpline/call center. The database has to be created out of the affidavits affirmed by students/parents, and to be stored electronically. Such database shall also function as a record of complaint received and the action taken.

The web portal is a term being used for all background software development that is necessary for smooth functioning of the Ragging Prevention Program and comprises of the following components:

- All calls received by Anti-ragging Helpline (18001805522) will be managed and followed up in a structured software system.
- Customized E-mail Management systems of the Call Centre
- Complaints follow up, log creation and display system on the web. Students can see the progress of their complaint any time on www.antiragging.in
- Online anti ragging affidavits can be downloaded by students from www.antiragging.in
- Creation of the colleges and universities data base.
- Reporting and statistics

The Web Portal is a medium of managing complaints, follow up of complaints and escalation of unresolved complaints to regulatory authorities, enhanced communication with colleges and universities, developing various kinds of data sets, displaying status of complaints, displaying various kinds of reports, development of various data sets etc

Source: July 26, 2012/PIB

All India Council for Technical Education to blame for poor pass percentage

As many as 16 engineering colleges in Western Tamil Nadu have a pass percentage of 35% or lower. In fact, in one Salem-based college the pass percentage was below 10%. Academicians blame the sorry state of affairs on the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), the top most statutory body for technical education in the country.

They say that even though the quality of the engineering colleges is suspect, the AICTE keeps approving them. "It is really a pitiful situation. Students are the ones who stand to lose the most. For everybody else, it's a win-win situation. The AICTE doesn't care for the quality of the colleges. Money is exchanged and education in the country has become a commercial affair," said a senior academician.

"We have been asking the AICTE to stop approving new colleges. Many colleges are little more than sheds. They should take a look at the infrastructure and faculty before approving new institutions. Now the academic results are there for everyone to see," he said.

He also pointed out that 40,000 to 50,000 seats will go vacant after the counselling that is going on in Chennai. Reports show that 40% of candidates did not show up for single window counselling. "Most of these students would have gone for the management quota seats in private colleges after paying exorbitant amounts," said former vice-chancellor of Anna University and Planning Commission member E Balaguruswamy.

In Tamil Nadu, 140 institutions were served show-cause notices last year and four were debarred from admitting students. As many as 71 colleges have been issued show cause notices. The AICTE has clarified that this is not a punitive but a corrective measure asking the colleges to shape up.

Source: July 28, 2012/Times of India

Govt. wants private players to set up medical colleges

Facing a shortage of doctors as well as institutes to impart medical education in Uttar Pradesh, the state government is planning to invite private players to establish medical colleges in districts where there are no medical institutes.

UP has a total of nine state government-run or autonomous medical institutes, two central government-funded colleges and 14 private colleges in the state. And apart from four new state government-run medical colleges in the pipeline, there are no medical institutes in three eastern divisions of the state— Devipatan, Basti and Mirzapur division.

The state government is now planning to promote private groups, which are already providing or planning to venture into medical education, to establish medical colleges in these three divisions. A meeting in this regard was held between interested private parties and Director General, Medical Education, last week for initial discussions for the project.

"We first invited suggestions from private players who are interested in establishing medical colleges in three divisions where there are no medical institutes. Further, we are also interested in promoting private players to establish medical colleges in all the districts that do not have colleges," said Saudan Singh, DG ME, Uttar Pradesh.

After the first round of talks, the state government is now waiting for recommendations from interested private parties before formulating a policy for facilitating such private colleges, said Singh.

"In the first meeting, the private players recommended a single window system for the project, facilitation in acquiring duty-free land and time-bound change in land usage for establishing the college, proper supply of electricity to the colleges and other such basic amenities. We are awaiting their final proposals and recommendations. The government will then formulate the policy for supporting such private institutes," said Singh.

In the previous Mayawati regime, the state government had decided to run three medical institutes, including the upcoming medical colleges in Azamgarh, Banda and Paramedical College in Saifai, on public private partnership (PPP) mode. However, the PPP projects were cancelled by the Akhilesh government, and now all three institutes are to be run by the state government.

The private colleges proposed to be established in the three divisions will not be on PPP model, but would be run by the private groups independently, with the government only facilitating the establishment of the colleges, added Singh.

Source: July 30, 2012/Indian Express

Tagore University work in full swing; committee submits plan

Undaunted by opposition to reforms in higher education, the human resource development ministry is forging ahead with its plans to change the face of India's universities.

Even though the legislation, Universities for Research and Innovation Bill, heralding the universities of the future is pending in Parliament, work on the blue print of the first publicly funded innovation university--the Tagore University for Liberal Arts-- is in full swing.

The ministry had tasked a committee comprising Jadavpur University professor Supriya Chaudhuri, historian Ram Guha, director of the King's College, London India Institut Sunil Khilnani, theatre personality Girish Karnad, and art historian BN Goswamy to prepare a blue print for the proposed university. The committee has submitted a detailed plan, and has met the human resource development minister Kapil Sibal as well.

"There is no timeline for setting up this university, as the Bill is still pending in Parliament," a ministry official said. However, the HRD ministry would like to see the Tagore University take off this year, as it the poet laureate's 150th birth anniversary.

As designed, the proposed Tagore University for Liberal Arts seeks to break away from the standard design of a central university—both in terms of governance and offering for students. To begin with it will be a non-affiliating unitary university.

In keeping with its ground breaking approach, the university will not confine itself to the accepted definition of "liberal arts"—that is restricted to humanities and social sciences—but instead drawing on the medieval Europe concept include sciences and fine arts. Neither will it be located in West Bengal, not will it be located in Delhi. Sources close to the development said that it was a conscious decision not to locate the university in West Bengal, "Tagore is not Bengal's icon, he is a universal figure.. nor should the university be close to Delhi," an official close to the discussion said.

But the university's radical departure lies in the manner in which it has fashioned its undergraduate and graduate programmes. It will offer a four years bachelor's programme—as against the stand three-year programme offered in central and state universities.

The structure of the bachelor's programme borrows a great deal from the American and English universities. In the first year, students will choose from a range of courses both from the school they are admitted to and other schools. In the second year, students will be required to take at least two courses in subject of specialization. Performance in these two courses will determine whether the student can take up the specialization he or she has chosen.

In the first three years, students will be required to taken compulsory courses in analytical thinking and writing skills, learn an additional Indian or foreign language, a course in a creative activity such as painting, arts, sports and participate in social work and extension activity.

In the fourth year of study, students can opt to take a foundation course in some research are, specialized skill or practical training which will be of use to them. These additional courses should not be a burden to the undergraduate but be part of regular pattern of university life.

Source: July 30, 2012/Economic Times

Indian National Commission for Cooperation with UNESCO meets: Appreciates Establishment of Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development

Union Minister of Human Resource Development Shri Kapil Sibal chaired the meeting of the Indian National Commission for cooperation with UNESCO, here today.

The Commission deliberated on India's future strategy for strengthening the networking and leadership role in UNESCO priority areas. The members also expressed their great appreciation for the establishment of the Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development (MGIEP) in India that will promote independent and collaborative research within and between the areas of peace, human rights, moral sciences, ethics, ecology, environment and other professional fields with the objective of facilitating global efforts towards building a new world order based on the principles of social justice, equity, good governance and sustainability. Shri Sibal underlined that the Institute will showcase the Indian philosophy of both peace and sustainable development that are deeply engrained into India's traditions, culture and thoughts.

Dr. Karan Singh, the designated member of India on the Executive Committee of UNESCO stressed on protecting and maintaining the cultural diversity including intangible heritage. He also highlighted the celebrations for Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore's 150th Anniversary and also highlighted the commemorative programmes planned with UNESCO for 150th Anniversary of Swami Vivekanand and 100th Anniversary of Amrita Shergil. He also stressed on value based education and the role of universities in UNESCO programmes and collaborating with the developing countries.

The discussions in the Commission also focused on India's achievements and future strategy for education for all, technical and vocational education and training, India's alliance in Literacy with UNESCO, use of ICT in education, open education resources, linguistic diversity, preservation of tangible, intangible heritage, India's leadership role in Oceanographic and Earth Sciences, freedom of press, empowering community through communication, development of tribal, classical and contemporary art as well as preservation and sharing of historical archival documents.

The Indian National Commission for UNESCO comprises of five different Sub-Commissions, namely, Education, Culture, Communications, Social Sciences and Natural Sciences in tune with the UNESCO priority areas.

The Commission has eminent persons from these fields as members. India has been actively engaged with UNESCO by assisting the UNESCO programmes and activities through annual contribution of about Rs.10 crore towards its regular budget. Extra-budgetary support and capacity building programmes are also taken up by India like contribution of US $ 1 lakh to World Heritage Committee for specific projects; special contribution of US $ 5 lakh to international programme for development of communication etc.

International Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO has assigned India the role of development of international training school for operational Oceanography on which India will be spending Rs.150 crore.

Source: July 31, 2012/PIB

ANALYSIS/OPINION/INNOVATIVE PRACTICE

Cultural integration is the key

Studying abroad is quite an adventure. The applicants who usually go to alien nations to fulfil their quest for education are mostly on the right side of thirty and are in a position to experience new emotions and situations with a fresh outlook.

Therefore, it is very important to blend in and follow a path to cultural integration. Regardless of the country the applicant is coming from, the culture of the student's host country has standards of appearance and social behaviour that subtly set it apart. More often than not, the visitor's dress, appearance, choice of words and habits may naturally let others know that he is not a local. There are safety issues too. Those who stick out as obvious visitors are targeted more often by pickpockets and other thieves. This may also draw unhealthy interest in the form of stares. It would be wise to observe and implement a dress sense to fit in. This can begin as a conscious exercise the moment the student lands.

The student should also keep in mind what makes him or her comfortable. For example, normal casual attire for an American student going to class may include a hooded sweatshirt or team logo t-shirt , shorts, tennis shoes, white athletic socks, and a baseball cap. Such dress habits may be considered rude or upstart in a social environment that of India's . A student may also notice that in some countries dressing for the class room may border on the formal. This could be unnerving too for anybody travelling from cities such as New Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore or Chennai. Rules of interaction may vary too. For instance, in some cultures, making eye contact with or greeting strangers in the Indian culture may illicit a strange look or even draw unwanted attention. On the other hand, some other cultures may be less ashamed about making inquisitive eye contact, which may seem like rude staring to an American visitor.

The student's experience may begin with fascination towards the host culture. The food tastes delicious , everything is novel and exciting ; full of enthusiasm, he or she senses that a wonderful experience lies ahead and cannot wait for everything that is to come. Before long, the student begins to encounter difficulties in the language (wherever applicable), colloquialisms , studies, and awkward interactions with the locals inadvertently creep in.

Independent consultants say something similar. According to Naveen Chopra of The Chopras Consultant, education undertaken in foreign contries is important because studying abroad is not merely about surfing the net, filling in application forms and sending them to universities you have heard of. It is a well planned investment that one makes in order to reap great results.

The internet, increased travel and a fast globalizing world has created huge higher education opportunities for students in countries across the globe. There are many reasons as to why education imbibed in foreign lands is important. Internationally sourced education offers global views and perspectives that enhance the education of students who are campus bound, in pursuit of an online degree or who have the opportunity to explore cultures and languages through education abroad. All students benefit from an education that incorporates global concepts regardless of their choice of major or future career goals.

In the global workforce, international education prepares students to work and live with greater success and purpose. In short, international education helps us to see outside of our own lives and realize that many perspectives, talents and hues create a more interesting world. WKU student Harveen Kaur, from New Delhi, India graduated on May 19, 2012 with a Master of Business Administration from Western Kentucky University. She is the first graduate from the United States Navitas pathway programs. Kaur began the Navitas Pre-Masters Program in January of 2011. While enrolled in this one-semester program, Kaur studied research methods, college reading strategies for graduate students, and introduction to leadership studies.

These credit-bearing courses helped prepare her for graduate level courses while giving her time to prepare for her MBA degree. In August, of 2011, Kaur began her Master of Business Administration program with the Gordon Ford College of Business at WKU. This MBA program is a one-year , fulltime option. Students attend day and evening classes within semesters held in August, January and May. Full-time students graduate from the program in one year from the time of admission. Some countries such as Singapore are hot favourites among aspiring students owing to the good infrastructure and support available from Indian consultancies and assisting companies, which ensure that the student's stay and study in

Singapore is an enviable one. Owing to proximity and sharing of culture, Singapore houses a lot of similarity with Indian cuisine and culture including a massive Tamilian population.

Source: 16 July, 2012/Times of India

Educating entrepreneurs

Philippe Courtier, who has taken over as the new president of EMLYON, July onwards, talks to Education Times on why it is important to prepare students to work with different ethos and economic situations that they will face in course of their careers.

The key focus of EMLYON Business School is entrepreneurship. How is the school preparing the new breed of entrepreneurs? EMLYON Business School's baseline, Educating Entrepreneurs for the World, reflects our vision of pedagogy. In general terms, the entrepreneurial dimension is at the very heart of the educational process of every one of the school's programmes, both in graduate and executive training. As the challenges in this new era of uncertainty are definitely more complex, we prepare students to work with the different ethos and economic situations that they will face in the course of their careers. We prepare them for entrepreneurial roles in start-ups , multinational companies, supranational organisations such as NGOs, and in entrepreneurial roles in emerging economies. Thus, we seek to develop in students an awareness of entrepreneurship that appreciates the contexts for opportunities whether they are geographical , institutional, social or economic.

What are the key challenges that business schools face today globally?

Many of the challenges that face business schools in the years ahead are also an opportunity to find new solutions . The difficult economic conditions of recent years require business schools to look beyond some of the traditional career paths in areas such as finance, and today there is far more interest in entrepreneurship as a way to kick-start the economy and create new high-growth ventures that create both social wealth and employment.

To make the most of these opportunities, notably in areas of technology, science and design, business schools will need to work closely with other academic institutions to share business expertise with the ideas and innovation of engineers, scientists and creative thinkers. As an example, next September, we will open a Master of Science in Innovation, Design Entrepreneurship & Arts (I.D.E.A.) with our partner, Centrale Lyon, which is one of the major engineering schools in France.

Economic growth in Asia means that business schools need to engage fully with markets in China, India and elsewhere to provide students with a real understanding of the business conditions that are reshaping the world economy. There is a war for talent for managers who can operate across cultural differences with an entrepreneurial and global mindset. Among other goals, our campus in Shanghai enables us to immerse our students in the Asian business and management environment.

How would you define entrepreneurship education?

We call it 'The Power of Start.' Being an entrepreneur means having a mindset that helps you look beyond existing protocol and think creatively. It means being able to identify business opportunities and having the skills to exploit them profitably. It is about creating tangible value for your organisation and managing innovation. That is why the entrepreneurial learning environment at EMLYON is committed to the interaction of both theory and practice. Our students develop a genuine understanding of the entrepreneurial mindset through case studies, lectures, coaching sessions and international practical experience. They learn how to conceive a business plan, conduct competitive /market intelligence, develop a distribution strategy, and innovate at each step in the supply chain. They come away with the analytical tools and the confidence to systematically assess business opportunities, whether for growth and development in the global market, running a family business, or driving innovation and knowledge creation in a multinational company.

Business projects enable students to combine their academic knowledge with real-life challenges, and the ability to work with and lead international teams. We take them through the different stages of launching a company, achieving growth, managing a family business, and successfully exiting a company.

Do you agree that only when times are hard entrepreneurs are born?

Actually we believe that, while some people are 'born entrepreneurs,' people can be developed to be entrepreneurial. This is what we call spirit of entrepreneurship. If some people are driven to be entrepreneurs based on need, a lot of them are driven to be entrepreneurs as a result of exposure to new ideas, awareness of gaps in the market, or particular passions or interests . Our students come from a wide range of countries with greatly varying economic, political, and social hardship. We seek to develop their entrepreneurial competencies for a

global use in their home countries or wherever they seek to work, in start-ups or big companies.

Do you plan any changes to the World Entrepreneurship Forum under your leadership?

The next edition of the World Entrepreneurship Forum will take place in Lyon from October 24-27. This year's theme is 'Entrepreneurial ecosystems: cultivating entrepreneurial communities.' In just five years, the World Entrepreneurship Forum has earned its place. In 2011, four new partners have joined EMLYON and KPMG: the two Singaporean institutions Action Community for Entrepreneurship and Nanyang Technological University, the City of Lyon and Lyon Chamber of Commerce. In 2012, Zhejiang University (China) is also joining the founding partners. This year's goal is to reinforce the link between cutting-edge academic research and best operational practices from all around the world.

Source: 16 July, 2012/Times of India

Autonomy Overruled

Recently, lawyers across India participated in protests against the proposed Higher Education and Research Bill (HER). Their contention—the bill will usurp the Bar Council of India's (BCI's) control over legal education. However, not all lawyers in the country support the strike or demands to exclude legal education from the purview of the bill. Anand Grover, senior advocate, Supreme Court, opines, "Though the Bar Council has failed in modernising the legal system, it does represent the body of lawyers in a democratic manner. The new bill seeks to take away the power of the BCI and vest it in bureaucrats. We need a mix of the two systems." Concurs Mumtaz Bandukwala, partner, Junarkar and Associates, "Protests and strikes affect people such as litigants who are not responsible for situations like these. BCI should only be concerned about administrative powers and legal ethics. Education should be looked at on a different, national level."

For the uninitiated, the BCI plays a crucial role in legal education in India under The Advocates Act, 1961. As per this act, the BCI defines standards of legal education in consultation with the universities in India imparting legal education and State Bar Councils. The council inspects and recognises universities, the degree of which is considered a qualification for enrolment as an advocate. It also recognises, on a reciprocal basis, the foreign qualifications in law obtained outside India for the purpose of admission as an advocate in India. However, most academicians maintain that the BCI has not fulfilled its duties appropriately. Shamnad Basheer, Ministry of HRD professor in IP Law, NUJS, West Bengal, says, "Unfortunately, the Bar Council has never consulted legal academics meaningfully. Rather, it has gone on to make derogatory remarks against the capabilities of legal academics in its recent submission to the Parliamentary Committee reviewing HER. It is high time the BCI appreciated that legal education norms are best framed by those that engage in legal education full-time. To the extent that the HER seeks to endorse this philosophy, it is a welcome move."

The HER will strip the BCI of all its educational regulatory powers. If the bill is passed, a National Commission for Higher Education and Research (NCHER) will be set up to facilitate determination and maintenance of standards of higher education and research in all areas except agricultural education. A General Council (GC) will be appointed to advise the NCHER on issues such as access, adequacy of funding and quality. The GC will consist of members of the NCHER, representatives of State Higher Education Council, heads of each professional body (including the BCI) and research council, one director each from IIT, IIM and national law universities. The NCHER may, with prior approval of the GC, make regulations specifying requirements for award of a degree or diploma, standards for appointment of vice-chancellors, norms of academic quality for accreditation, norms for establishment and winding up of educational institutions, and regulation for entry of foreign educational institutions.

The HRD ministry however, has maintained that the BCI's autonomy in so far as specifying standards of higher education concerning practice in courts shall not be affected as a result of this bill.

Source: 16 July, 2012/My Education Times

Essay on Higher Education in India

India has travelled a long way in education, from the "Guru -Shishya" practice of learning under the shade of a tree in medieval times, to becoming the second largest in the field of higher education world over after United States!

Today, all high school students start thinking about career options but the question is whether our country has the facilities to help our dreams soar in the sky or whether we have to go abroad to make our dreams come true. After extensive research on this topic, it is indeed reassuring to know that "Our future lies in safe hands."

In the current world scenario new inventions, modern technologies, growing economy and competition is the order of the day. In this emerging global one upmanship, India is trying to position itself as a knowledge driven economy. Higher

education assumes tremendous importance in facing these challenges.

What is higher education? To put it simply, it is a stage of learning that occurs after secondary education at the Universities, Colleges and Institutes of Technology. The aim of higher education is to prepare a person to play his part well, as an enlightened member of society.

The world has fast shrunk to a common platform of education and learning. It is then heartening to know that some Indian universities like Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Indian Institute of Management (IIM) and Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) have been listed in the world's top two hundred universities. In the field of finance, Indian School of Business, Hyderabad has been ranked number 12 in the global MBA ranking by Financial Times, London.

All India Institute of Medical Sciences has been recognized as a global leader in medical research and treatment. In sheer numbers, Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) can proudly boast of being the largest university in the world, with approximately 3.5 million students across the globe.

During the last few years, universities have increased manifold and colleges have mushroomed all over our country to impart higher education. However whether just the availability of educational institutes means do we have a robust higher education system?

In this scenario, a conflicting picture arises with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's words, "Our university system is, in many parts, in a state of disrepair. In almost half the districts higher education enrollment are abysmally low. Almost two third of our universities and 90% of colleges are rated below average in quality parameters..."

Unfortunately, we are lacking hugely in terms of quality output from our higher education institutes.

This can be confirmed from the fact that barring exception of few institutes mentioned above very little world class research gets published from other institutes, very few new innovations comes from Indian soil.

There are no Nobel prizes awarded to Indian Scientist who has exclusively worked in India and published his research from Indian soil.

This is not true for Indians living abroad, so the talent is there but drive to achieve the results from this talent is not there. This has sadly led to a massive "brain drain"

The first step towards improvement has to be taken at school level with aptitude tests being introduced to know where the interest of the student lies.

These students should then be encouraged to join those fields of interest. Emphasis should be laid on not just increasing the number of higher education institutes but Centre of excellence. Great stress must be laid on good infrastructure and facilities. Achievers in every field should be rewarded adequately.

Universities for other varied branches other than Engineering and Medicine should come up to prevent saturation in restricted fields. Last but not the least CORRUPTION needs to be routed out and money used to start more projects and research scholarships.

In conclusion higher education means integrated development of personality which should be imparted through head, hand and heart. Rabindranath Tagore rightly said, "The higher education is that which does not merely give us information, but makes life in harmony with all existence".

Source: 16 July, 2012/Preserve Articles

Three keys to make India-US ties soar

A leading US think tank has proposed three key focussed policy initiatives - a bilateral investment treaty, accelerated defence trade and educational collaboration - to unleash the full potential of the India-US relationship.

Given the current combination of economic and political compulsions, any new initiative in US-India relations may need to wait until among other things the US presidential election, Karl Inderfurth, Wadhwani Chair in US-India Policy Studies at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), acknowledged.

But these goals are "achievable", Inderfurth, who served as US assistant secretary of state for South Asian affairs during President Bill Clinton's second term, told IANS in an interview.

Discounting "concerns expressed by some that the US-India relationship is at rest or stalled" as "sort of exaggerated" he said looking at the high-level attention given to it in both the capitals, "I remain very enthusiastic about where the bilateral relationship is headed."

"Over the last decade US-India relationship has come a great distance during a short period of time and our view is much more can be done to unleash the full potential of that relationship, starting with the economic trade and commercial areas," Inderfurth said.

"There is no question that even though US-India trade overall has surpassed $100 billion a year for

the first time, much more can be done," he said outlining the role of Bangalore based Wadhwani Foundation, set up by Silicon Valley (California)-based entrepreneur Dr. Romesh Wadhwani.

"That's why we are focussing on that particular initiative here at the Wadhwani Chair that is to see the two countries move as expeditiously as possible on concluding a bilateral investment treaty (BIT)."

"I think everyone sees this as a potentially achievable goal right now as both governments have placed our economic relationship at the top of our agenda," he said.

Inderfurth said the Wadhwani chair can "contribute to that with pushing forward a good solid analysis of BIT and what that will mean to both countries" and working with others, including the US-India Business Council (USIBC), the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) and the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII).

Another initiative is a report prepared by CSIS on "US-India Defence Trade: Opportunities for Deepening the Partnership."

The report analyses the current state of bilateral defence trade and provides a series of recommendations for both the US and India in order to help them "unlock the full potential" of their defence partnership.

"We believe that overall defence relationship between the US and India is an important component of our security for both countries and one part of that is defence trade, which is a concrete manifestation of the change in our relationship," said Inderfurth who has penned the foreword of the report.

"Yet another initiative that is showing great traction and interest is in the whole area of US-India educational cooperation especially with respect to community colleges," he said, noting that it had become the focal point of discussion, including at the recent US-India educational dialogue here.

This is one area that the Wadhwani Foundation and the Wadhwani Chair are pursuing, Inderfurth said, as "we see the connection of US-India educational collaboration and skills training collaboration as one of the key means of advancing and accelerating India's economic growth."

Noting that India's under 25 population made up half of India's overall 1.2 billion population, he said:

"This could either prove to be a demographic benefit (with education and skills training) or demographic disaster (without it)."

Source: 16 July, 2012/IANS/India Nydaily

Do not shackle legal education

The proposed overarching law to regulate higher education, with its focus on state control, cannot do much good for legal research.

Not long ago, the Bar Council of India found itself amidst a controversy regarding the qualifications required to practice law. Despite resistance from law students, it introduced an examination that law graduates would have to take in order to enroll at the bar.

The measure, notwithstanding its uncertain legality as per a strict reading of the Advocates Act 1961, was an ambitious one: law schools have, by and large, focused on regulating the input of students, thereby ensuring quality; this change aimed at scrutinising the output as well. If made to work well, it could potentially impact both the quality of lawyers and the quality of legal education.

NEW EDUCATION BILL

Now, only a few months later, another controversy has erupted involving the Bar Council, and threatens to radically impact legal education in India. The controversy involves the Higher Education and Research Bill 2011, a law which aims to establish the National Commission for Higher Education and Research. The proposed Commission is one that "shall...take all such steps as it may think fit for the promotion and coordination of higher education and research" and "make regulations to determine, coordinate and specify standards of higher education and research."

As Sections 16(2) and 17(2) of the Bill confirm, the steps and regulations envisaged are wide-ranging and the Commission exercises broad powers. The need for such a single all-encompassing regulatory body in higher education is a large and complex question, and one that has invited some commentary. The Bar Council's concern is, of course, not the general sentiment towards higher education regulation that animates the Bill but its intrusion into legal education.

Legal education is currently the responsibility of the Bar Council, and Section 7 of the Advocates Act empowers the body to "promote legal education" and regulate its standards. According to the Council, the Bill takes away this power and goes against the Advocates Act. The point here isn't a legal one – Parliament can pass a law that runs against a previous law; the doctrine of implied repeal will apply – but one that attempts to bring to light a change in the regulatory regime.

On June 11 and 12, around 1.7 million lawyers went on strike in protest of the Bill and in a submission made to the Standing Committee of Parliament on Human Resource Development in May, the Bar

Council launched a litany of charges, alleging that the Bill violated federalism, democracy, and professional autonomy.

AUTONOMOUS COLLEGES

Notwithstanding the hyperbolic statement, the Bar Council did rightly emphasise the success of the National Law School of India University, Bangalore, and the five-year B.A., LL.B. dual degree model. We now have fifteen such schools, and they threaten to continue to mushroom with remarkable energy.

But we should recognise that the growth of law schools does not confirm the Bar Council's effective regulation of legal education. In fact, the growth of such schools seems to be taking place without reflection upon either institutional considerations like faculty quality or other goals like the pedagogical purpose of legal education.

There is a growing sense that such institutions are being pulled along entirely on the strength of their students, and even when basic changes in infrastructure and so forth take place, they do so as a result of student agitation. Furthermore, as we go lower down the food chain, it is clear that these rapidly-emerging institutions aren't being pulled along at all.

Although a law degree has now become a rather prestigious enterprise, and lucrative job opportunities follow those from the leading law schools, there has been little discussion about the aims of legal education. Such law schools hoped to improve the quality of the bar. But, in reality, few embrace the life of a litigating lawyer, and not entirely without good reason.

BAR COUNCIL'S RECORD

More seriously, perhaps, there has been little effort to create a culture of legal education which promotes genuine research output that can understand and shape legal change. The LL.B. course still does not have even a basic set of quality student textbooks in each area of law, let alone a respectable and authoritative law journal that can create a conversation between students, scholars, lawyers, and judges.

Does the current Bill provide a better solution? Although it identifies a problem, the solution hardly seems better. No regulatory option is a priori superior, and we are always limited by choice rather than imagination. Our current crisis of accountability is such that the proposed model seems even less likely to succeed.

The Bar Council has raised an important and valid claim: the uninspiring track record of regulatory bodies like the one proposed in the Bill. Legal education at the level of a doctoral and masters degree (Ph.D. and LL.M.) lies within the domain of the state and not the Bar Council, and it is this area of legal education that remains most neglected. More importantly, though, other fields of education within the state's exclusive domain only confirm this tragic reality.

Very few can honestly deny that the Bar Council has been a poor self-regulator. How many lawyers ever get into trouble for malpractice? One can also not deny that even India's best schools suffer from serious and basic institutional challenges, from faculty to infrastructure. The Bar Council has not addressed these with the enthusiasm that shines through its submission to the Standing Committee.

But it's also true that concern and attention around these factors is growing, that the alumni of such institutions will, in time, play a larger role in their affairs, and that recent measures like the bar examination are good signs for the future.

The present Bill will destroy this slow but moving train. It vests complete power in members nominated by the government, and will shower us with the same problems of state-regulation that have plagued Indian higher education for so long. Despite all our current problems, the solution does not lie with government appointees. The Bar Council has certainly built the buildings; it now needs to nurture the space for ideas within them.

Source: 17 July, 2012/The Hindu Business Line

Medicine 2 Last

Pointing out that India was lagging behind the Pointing out that India was lagging behind the world average in terms of gross enrolment ratio, Prof Singh said there was need to reduce the elitist orientation of higher education which had to be made available to everyone.

University-industry linkages have to be strengthened and there has to be a symbiotic relationship between the two. In the US, most of the bio-technology companies trace their origins to the university laboratories, he said adding the partnership between universities and industries would help transform India into a technological super power.

Pointing out that the current expenditure in higher education in India was less than one per cent of GDP, he underlined the need to increase state funding while diversifying the modes of financing higher education. The eminent scientist commented that expansion of higher education had brought with it deterioration in the quality of education which was the result of compromises made at various levels, absence of proper planning,

inadequate facilities and no clarity of purpose, The quality of output of higher education depends upon the quality of educational infrastructure, instructional design, quality of curriculum, quality of teachers and their motivation, he said adding the curricula should be flexible and adaptive to the needs of society, industry, market as well as the goals of higher education.

A former Director of Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB), Hyderabad, Prof Singh had led a research team in developing a probe called Bkm-derived probe for DNA fingerprinting which is being used for forensic investigation, paternity determination and seed stock verification. He pioneered the establishment of the Centre for DNA Fingerprinting and Diagnostics (CDFD) in Hyderabad.

Chancellor of the University, Prof Khageswar Pradhan presided over the ceremony where Honoris Causa was presented to Prof Damodar Acharya, Director of IIT, Kharagpur. The honorary degree was also presented to Dr Subrat Kumar Acharya, Head of Department of Gastroenterology at AIIMS, New Delhi in absentia.

Source: 17 July, 2012/PTI/IbnLive

Grooming Technology Leaders

What is the guiding principle at Indian Institute of Information Technology and Management-Kerala (IIITM-K), which distinguishes it from other technology and management institutions of the country?

Indian Institute of Information Technology and Management-Kerala (IIITM-K) was established in the year 2000 by the Government of Kerala, to promote higher education and IT related information services across Kerala and beyond. The mission of the institute is to be an institution of excellence in providing high quality education, research, development, and training in basics and applied areas of information technology and management.

At IIITM-K we provide a nurturing and challenging environment that encourages academic excellence, character development and challenge each student with cutting edge technology. The course delivery is rigorous as it provides a unique and innovative learning environment, with emphasis on fundamentals and advanced topics in IT, managerial skills, and interpersonal skill sets, with intense hands on experience in domain based labs. Our students gain latest knowledge and skills necessary to meet the challenges and rigors of today's competitive world that equips them to be leaders in the emerging knowledge driven industry, services and management.

What are your initiatives to promote technology education in Kerala?

Technology is only a facilitator which makes life simpler and easier and is developing day by day. The basic strength of programmes in technology is mathematics, physics, science and engineering, that has to be considered as primary indicators of quality of technical education. The courses at IIITM-K are designed by realising the need of interdisciplinary studies and the highly skilled manpower requirement in scientific organisation, industry and government. Government of Kerala has introduced a new scheme called Special Postgraduate Education Expansion Drive in IT (SPEED-IT) for producing more post graduates and PhD holders in IT by providing scholarships for study. IIITM-K is one of the beneficiaries of the SPEED-IT scholarship.

Which are the unique courses that IIITM-K offers students?

The institute is now offering three Masters programmes, one research programme and one postgraduate diploma programme in e-governance. The postgraduate programmes are in information technology, computational science, geo-informatics, eco-informatics, and e-governance. While the Masters programmes and the research programmes are open to both fresh and experienced candidates, the post-graduate diploma programme in e-governance basically aims at developing skills to implement e-governance in professionals working in government and industry. The programme is also open to fresh graduates who are interested to make a career in e-governance.

Besides the teaching programmes the institute conducts training programmes for government and industry aiming at capacity building. It does several sponsored as well as faculty/ students initiated research in information technology and in disciplines relevant to it. As part of the mission to popularise and educate general public on the use of information technology, research findings are disseminated through professional journals, magazines, local newspapers and also by holding state and national level seminars, workshops and conferences.

What does IIITM-K look for in a candidate? What important factors do you consider during admission?

We look only the ability of a student to learn and innovate. The admission process involves a national level test, accessing their ability in mathematics, reasoning and basic science and engineering. Those

who are having valid GATE score are exempted from written test. Interview is only a personal interaction and counselling to find out their interest to study, ability to cope up with the course etc.

What kind of placement records are you generating year on year?

IIITM-K has excellent track record of job placement for students. Most of the graduates take up a career in major companies like JFWTCGE, IBM, Oracle, TCS, MindTree, Infosys, Wipro, Zensar Technologies, Tata Elxsi, V-Moksha, HCL Infosystems, Patni Computer Systems, Siemens, Amdocs, US Technology, IBS, Ingenero, Huawei Technologies, Mcfadyen and several others, through job placements and campus internships. The institute has an active placement cell with several experts providing orientation and counselling for students.

What is the strength of IIITM-K in terms of faculty?

High quality learning with strong emphasis on research and development is an essential component to improve the quality of education. For this, an institution needs to invest in faculty with good support for doing research and teaching. Our institute attracts the best faculty drawn from premier academic institutions in India and abroad. They have been carefully chosen taking into consideration their years of experience in teaching and research, commitment and the quality of their instruction.

What are your future plans?

The institute aims to grow as a premier institution of excellence in science, technology, systems and management and related areas by introducing advanced teaching and research programmes. These programmes will aim at developing professionals, academicians, researchers and leaders of high calibre. The institute will set up a full fledged campus with all the facilities in the near future and is aiming to become an institute of national importance with a degree granting status.

Source: 17 July, 2012/My Education Times

Politics, unionism in education cannot be separated: Amartya Sen

Observing that politics cannot be separated from unions formed by teachers or students, Nobel laureate Amartya Sen Tuesday emphasised on the need for using the synergy of the two entities to universalise and improve the quality of education in India.

"Traditionally and globally unions of teachers and students have had political affiliations. The synergy of the two entities has historical importance and the two cannot be separated," he said.

Speaking at an interactive session on "Problems of school education and the role of teachers" associations" at the Calcutta University, Sen said there was a need to use the synergy of politics and unionism optimally for development of education.

"Politics is defined as the art of the possible. We must therefore look at ways to synergise politics and union movement to universalise and improve the quality of education in the country," he said.

Though, he refused to comment on the Vishva Bharati row where a student was forced to lick her urine for bedwetting, Sen - an alumnus of the university founded by another Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore - said punishment to students has never yielded any positive results.

He said the quality of school education in India was inferior in comparision to other countries and urged on the need to explore ways to develop the standard of education.

"The reason for many prevalent social vices in our country is the lack of education. Education alone can remove caste or gender based or other inequalities. There is need to explore ways to spread education to remove the inequalities in the society," added Sen.

Source: 18 July, 2012/IANS/Two Circle

The Single Most Important Experiment in Higher Education

Online education platform Coursera wants to drag elite education into the 21st century. Now, it's getting buy-in from the academy.

As of yesterday, a year-old startup may well have become the most important experiment yet aimed at remaking higher education for the Internet age.

At the very least, it became the biggest.

A dozen major universities announcedthat they would begin providing content to Coursera, an innovative platform that makes interactive college classes available to the public free on the web. Next fall, it will offer at least 100 massive open online courses -- otherwise known as MOOCs*-- designed by professors from schools such as Princeton, CalTech, and Duke that will be capable of delivering lessons to more than 100,000 students at a time.

Founded by Stanford computer scientists Daphne Koller and Andrew Ng, Coursera is one of a handful of efforts aimed at using the web's cost savings to bring Ivy League-quality courses to the masses. Its peers include the joint Harvard-MIT project edX and Udacity, a free online university created by Google executive and former Stanford professor Sebstian Thrun. (Another high-profile startup,Minerva, is attempting to create an actual "online Ivy" that students will pay to attend.)

But the deals Coursera announced Tuesday may well prove to be an inflection point for online education, a sector that has traditionally been dominated by for-profit colleges known mostly for their noxious recruitment practices and poor results. That's because the new partnerships represent an embrace of web-based learning from across the top tier of U.S. universities. And where the elite colleges go, so goes the rest of academia.

Coursera has previously teamed with Stanford, Princeton, University of Pennsylvania, and University of Michigan to offer 43 courses, which according to the New York Times enrolled 680,000 students. It now adds to its roster Duke, Caltech, University of Virginia, Georgia Tech, University of Washington, Rice, Johns Hopkins, University of California San Francisco, University of Illinois Urbana-Champagne, University of Toronto, University of Edinburgh, and Switzerland's École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne.

Only one school, the University of Washington, said it will give credit for its Coursera classes. But two others, University of Pennsylvania and Caltech, said they would invest $3.7 million into the enterprise, bringing the company's venture funding to more than $22 million. Literally, colleges are buying in.

And the bigger the buy-in, the better. The fundamental challenge for U.S. universities as they struggle to contain their costs is figuring out how to teach more students using fewer resources. That's what MOOCs were born to do. In theory, these automated classes have the power to create the first truly radical efficiency gains in the history of higher education, a leap that would take us light years beyond our creaky current system that, as Coursera's Koller noted to me in an interview, is still bound up in traditions that date back to the Middle Ages.

"Lectures came about several hundred years ago when there was one copy of the book, and the only person who had it was the professor," she said. "The only way to convey the content was for the professor to stand at the front of the room and read the book. One would hope that we had better capabilities these days."

We may have the capabilities. But academics are wary of them. In a recent poll by Inside Higher Edand Babson Survey Research Group, 58 percent of professors said they were more afraid of online learning than excited by it.

A full two thirds said learning outcomes on the web were inferior to in-person instruction. Yet, the more experience instructors had teaching online, the more positive they felt about it.

And therein lies Coursera's promise. The company does not consider itself an alternative to a traditional university.

Rather, it's more of a market for learning. Schools that design classes for Coursera retain the rights to their work, meaning it's a risk-free way for them to dip into online education without building the technology infrastructure from scratch. In turn, professors can incorporate the web material into their regular courses, for instance by turning their 9 a.m. lectures into homework. In time, the process could breed more familiarity, less contempt, and much more efficient classrooms.

As Koller and Ng acknowledged in our interview, Coursera is still in some ways a work in progress. Its grading technology, they said, is capable of assessing sophisticated assignments in science and math, but the company is still working out the best way to handle longer written work for humanities and social science programs.

And as with many Silicon Valley darlings, how it will generate revenue is also a bit of an open question. Ng suggested that some schools may sell branded certificates, or that Coursera could begin offering career placement services, matching employers with students who demonstrate specific skills.

I asked Ng if he felt that would risk turning Coursera into a competitor with the universities that provide its courses. His answer, in short, was no. The real value of attending an elite school, such as Caltech, he said, is not the content of the classes. Rather, it's time spent working directly with professors and other students.

And by letting colleges put lectures online, Coursera has the potential to make more time for those interactions.

"With this technology, we're improving education for the hundreds of thousands of students out there, as well as improving it for the students on these campuses," Ng said.

That's an answer about Caltech or Princeton. What it leaves unaddressed is whether some day, students might choose to take inexpensive Coursera classes instead of attending a pricier mid-tier college. We can only speculate about that.

But regardless of whether you believe that today's brick and mortar universities will be -- or should be -- our main vehicle for higher education in the long-term, yesterday's announcement should give you something to celebrate -- because while Coursera isn't looking to end college as we know it, it is trying to nudge it into the 21st century. And colleges themselves seem to be on board.

Source: 18 July, 2012/ The Atlantic

Does the Indian education system teach students how to collaborate?

Education, infrastructure development, and the democratization of media are the three key sectors on which progression of any society depends. In the United States in particular, and the western world in general, the foundations of world leadership were laid when the country channeled massive investments into the educational sector. The result was a robust and innovative education system that nurtured research and advancement in society. This robust system consists of individual systems, like Harvard University and MIT, but speaks to a larger, nationwide framework on which educational policies and innovations are built. In fact, many businesses trace their origins to university labs.

A similar revolution (although on a much smaller scale and at a slower pace) is in progress in India. Groups like the Indian Institutes of Technologies and the Indian School of Business have incorporated world class standards and their alumni can be found in executive positions in every industry, all over the world. India today is the largest exporter of software technology and engineers in the world and much of this success is owed to the stress of information and communication technology training in the Indian educational curriculum. This, however, reflects only a small number of advancements.

As the world moves and changes at a rapid pace, particulary the global business environment, people are rethinking the way they run their companies by reforming corporate strategies and realigning their values—many times from a competitive approach to a collaborative one. This process of making decisions is becoming more prominent and involving employees operating at all levels.

I recently came across a plethora of initiatives that reflect these ideas at the academic level, like the joint venture, edX, between Harvard University and MIT. Others, like Dweeber and ePals, are innovative start ups that advocate for collaboration. Then there are large, established corporations like HCL Technologies who are rethinking management. Disruption is the keyword here, whether it's at the academic, business or individual level. And this has major implications for (and dependence on) our educational system.

Is the Indian education system operating in a way that prepares its citizens to become contributors to these world changing initiatives? Is our education system inclusive? Does it encourage students in all ways to become responsible global citizens? Is the education system keeping up with the changes in the global business environment? Can "disruption" in the the way education is imparted in our schools and colleges make the world a better place to live and work? Being a fairly pragmatic person, my answer to all these questions, except the last, is "no." Being an eternal optimist, my answer to the last question is "yes."

To bring about change, I believe we need to:

1) Encourage collaboration in the classroom daily.

Most schools prepare students for a competitive, "dog eat dog" world. Instead, we need to promote a collaborative attitude in these growing minds. Not only will it make them better professionals and team players, it will instill a responsibility to promote a great good in society. "Growing by learning and sharing together" is a much better proposition, both at an individual and global community level.

2) Implement mandatory participation in an open source project.

The benefits of participation in an open source project are collateral in nature. This kind of initiative will not only create opportunities for students to network with other students who have similar interests and inclinations, but it will add immense value to their resumes. Students will learn how to connect with each other, work together on small projects with a diverse group, and gain a better understanding of and appreciation for a "collaborative world."

Source: 18 July, 2012/ Opensource.com

A neoliberal attack on India's schools

IN THE current climate, with the direction of higher education in India being hotly contested, a university official might be heard saying the following:

Welcome to the Tweeds Cosmopolitan University, India! You will have the privilege of studying at the first "offshore" foreign university in India and save 70 percent of what you would spend for the same degree in the UK (approximate tuition $1,600 per semester). Throw in another $3,679 and you can even spend a semester on our UK campus. The campus is spread over 30 lush green acres and surrounded by 1,400 acres of otherwise protected national forest land. Opt for undergraduate or graduate degrees in Business Management, Marketing, Hospitality and Image Management. Our campus was inaugurated by former and current state chief ministers and continues to be generously supported by the authorities. Our entrepreneurial partners own one of the largest media groups in India.

A small temporary hitch--our degrees are currently not recognized by the University Grants Commission of India. And, oh yes, some of our students have begun to sue us. As we said, it's "temporary"...just watch the Indian parliament!

It is difficult to gauge whether "Tweeds Cosmo" (name changed) is the rottenest apple in the barrel--only because the lack of regulation prevents us knowing how many rotten apples there are. What is without doubt is that a great deal of money has already been made by a convenient nexus of businessmen, politicians and, of course, the foreign universities concerned. Students craving the newest "hot" degrees ("Image Management" being the hottest at the moment) have yet again been fooled and defrauded.

Such higher education scams, of course, were perfected in the 1990s with the proliferation of for-profit unaccredited medical and engineering colleges.

It is in this milieu that the Honorable Minister of Human Resource Development (formerly the Ministry of Education) Kapil Sibal introduced six bills for higher education reform in the monsoon session of parliament this year. Drafted with minimal consultation with civil society, the six bills will, in effect, reduce higher education to a status of tradable commodity which can be sold to those with higher purchasing power.

More specifically, the bills propose to:

Restructure (or just plainly and simply deregulate) higher education regulations and accreditation along lines promoted by the World Trade Organization to facilitate higher education "entrepreneurs" (both foreign and domestic);

Deprive students of the right to unionize and the right to resort to the court system for redress of grievances;

Generally trivialize knowledge and the profession of university teaching

Not one of these bills intends to strengthen public higher education, which has been neglected for three decades.

FACED WITH staunch opposition from a few political parties (including the Communist Party of India-Marxist), as well as civil society (such as the All India Forum for the Right to Education), the minister has been unable to get the Foreign Educational Institutions Bill in Parliament.

It was an unfortunate development for his plans to announce that Indian higher education had "opened up" during recent Indo-U.S. strategic dialogues in Washington, D.C. So instead, he instructed the central regulatory body--the University Grants Commission--to explore possibilities within existing laws to permit foreign institutions to enter, as well as to facilitate, "twinning programs" and the granting of joint degrees--presumably such as those pioneered by Tweeds Cosmo.

The Honorable Minister then poured his considerable image management skills into trying to "sell" India as a desirable destination for foreign direct investment during interactions at the Carnegie Endowment and the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry and at a luncheon hosted by the U.S.-India Business Council (USIBC) and the Confederation of Indian Industry.

His latest pitch: Indian higher education in the 21st century will be driven by "cyber-universities" or "multiple universities coming together in cyberspace to grant a single degree, saving students enormous costs by substituting physical attendance on college premises with distance learning via the Internet," according to The Hindu.

In closing, when we talk about higher education in India today, we may only be talking about 18 percent of the population. Access to quality higher education is still largely a function of gender, class, caste, religion and other historical markers of social privilege and power.

However, the small window for equitable opportunity afforded by public universities with policies (including tuition subsidies, low-cost or free boarding and lodging, and reservations for scheduled castes and tribes) is likely to disappear if the masters of liberalization have their way.

Source: 19 July, 2012/ Socialist Worker

RTE not against home schooling and alternate education: MHRD

In response to a public interest litigation, the Ministry of Human Resources Development on Thursday filed an affidavit in the Delhi High Court stating that the Right to Education Act does not come in the way of home schooling.

The affidavit, however, said National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) for children in the age group of 6-14 years will only be allowed to run up to 2015.

“Parents who voluntarily opt for alternate forms of schooling may continue to do so. The RTE Act does not come in the way of such alternate schooling methodologies or declare such form of education as illegal,” the affidavit stated.

The Minsitry’s response came after the High Court directed it to respond to a petition filed by a 14-year-old girl, Shreya Sahai, who opted for home schooling but contended that Section 18 of RTE Act

does not recognise any other mode of imparting education except the one through formal schooling.

"The benefits of all children aged 6-14 years and their parents who feel threatened because their right to choose a mode of education for primary education stands violated as the Act restricts the same only to a formal school," she said.

All other modes of imparting education, except a formal school, like home schooling, alternate schools of education and the schools not subscribing to the norms and curriculum mandated in the Act stand declared illegal under sections 18 and 19 of the Act, said the petition.

"Subscribers of the academics check tests conducted by the government-established NIOS feel threatened of the discontinuance of the same in view of the impugned Act," the petitioner said.

The petition sought the court's direction to quash the RTE provisions as they are violative of the fundamental rights of children, the petition said. It also asked for home-schooling and alternate education schools to be included in the "specified category" and also allow NIOS continue imparting education to children. The matter will come up for hearing on August 8.

Source: 20 July, 2012/ Indian Express

Be optimistic about our country, IIT-ians told

IIT-ians could go abroad for higher studies but should remember to come back not just because India needs them but as they would realise later in life that this country, no matter how badly governed, was the country of the future, said Fali S. Nariman, senior advocate, Supreme Court of India.

Delivering the 49 convocation at Indian Institute of Technology - Madras on Friday, Mr. Nariman asked the IITians not be disheartened about quotas and reservations in education. Affirmative action in education was what the country needed, and not mere quotas, he said using a quote by an America's youngest college president Anthony Marx who emphasised the need for higher education to be an equaliser.

"Remember that prosperity we see around us is all skin-deep," Mr. Nariman said, adding that the rich in the country definitely appeared to be getting richer but the poor still remained mired in abject poverty, shut out from education and job opportunities because of globalisation or despite globalisation. Stating that he was never too optimistic about the governments, both Centre and State, he asked students to be optimistic about the future of the country and not to despair. "The country is to us – and will always be – greater than all the governments we have had – or will ever have," he said.

IIT-M Board of Governors Chairman Prof M.M. Sharma said scientists and engineers had a crucial role to play in the whole range of economic activities as growth was directly connected to innovations. IIT-M had admitted close to 400 students in Ph.Ds recently, with a high percentage from engineering.

IIT-M Director Prof. Bhaskar Ramamurthi said a total of 1,679 degrees — 141 Ph.D; 127 M.S; 467 M.Tech; 69 MBA; 29 M.A; 123 M.Sc; 225 Dual Degree (B.Tech and M.Tech) and 273 B.Tech and the first batch of nine PG Diplomas in Metro Rail Technology and Management — were awarded at the convocation.

Source: 20 July, 2012/ The Hindu

Affirmative action, not quotas for education': Na

Eminent jurist Fali Sam Nariman on Friday said affirmative action in education is what the country needed and not "quotas."

"Affirmative action in education is what we need -- not quotas," he said, delivering the 49th convocation address at the IIT Madras here.

Advising students planning to go abroad for higher studies, he said, "Go, but always remember to come back. Not only because India needs you, but because (as you will only later realise) you need India."

"...Don't be disheartened as so many have become - about quotas and reservations in education," Nariman told a large gathering of students and academics.

Citing South African leader Nelson Mandela's words that the doors of learning should be kept open, he said, "We in this country also need to make sure that the doors of learning are always kept open because India still belongs to the developing world."

Noting that the prosperity witnessed around was "skin deep," Nariman said he was not sure whether because of globalisation or despite globalisation, the rich in India appeared to be getting richer and the poor still remained mired in abject poverty, shut out from education and job opportunities.

The eminent lawyer said he was optimistic about the future of India "Though never too optimistic about its governments - whether central or state, whether past, present or future."

"Don't despair. Governments are the same everywhere - in every country," he said.

Source: 20 July, 2012/ Zee News

India has vast potential to be regional education hub

India has vast potential to emerge as a regional education hub, but needs innovative and challenging opportunities in government policies to bring it to global standards, says David Johnson, dean, St Anthony's College, Oxford University.

The university and India's Core Education and Technologies has introduced a nine-month programme in Kerala on innovative approach to in-service training or professional development of teachers. In an interview to Rica Bhattacharyya from ET, Johnson speaks on the gaps in professional education in India and what could be done to bring it to global standards. Excerpts:

Where do you think gap lies in professional education in India and what could be done to bring it to global standards? What are the challenges?

In terms of global standards of professional or management education where other countries are moving rapidly is the professionalisation of such courses. In the UK, for instance, professional bodies suggest academic training in domain of higher education that very often universities cannot manage on their own. My immediate sense on the gap in India is that there is no immediate emphasis on who manages their professional education. The notion of professionalisation has nothing to do with collection of degrees.

What are India's prospects of emerging as a regional education hub?

India, more than any country, has vast potential to be a hub for education. In India, there are huge number of people with huge professional knowledge, including academics and social scientists, but they not getting the opportunity for collaboration. I have seen Indian teachers in action with fantastic skills and expertise. There is huge potential to make the world recognize this is where they want to be. What I saw in South Africa was the redrawing of higher education plans that requires huge amount of creative thinking and innovation - thinking that is ethical and the immediate visible result was the camping of number of UK academics in SA universities. India needs innovative and challenging opportunities in government policies in every sphere, not just in education.

What kind of training needs for teachers at primary level have you identified?

What we can see through research is a significant qualitative shift in how teachers approach their thinking about what it is they are doing. We are able to document the reflection of practitioners. The outcome is a growth model that is lacking not only in India and other developing nations but even in a lot of developed countries. There is lack of research on how teachers have grown in profession. We have achieved network learning communities in a concentrated way with guidance from our people or through internet driven technologies. The model we have developed is cutting edge and produces "reflective practitioners", who can be thoughtful, in a way that they are guided and supported.

Source: 21 July, 2012/ Economic Times

Invest in education: Amartya Sen

Amartya Sen, the Nobel laureate and chancellor of upcoming Nalanda University in Bihar, said here on Friday it was massive investment in education in the select East Asian nations that not only led to their emergence on the international map, but also helped in the formation of their identity as East Asian giants.

Sen, in this regard, cited the case of Japan which, under the Meji Restoration period, saw a huge investment in elementary education under 'Education for All' programme. As a result, Japan, in early 20th century, was "producing more books than Great Britain, and also twice the number of books produced in the US."

He also said Bangladesh, in recent times, had pumped in a huge sum of money for the promotion of elementary education, even as its growth rate in terms of gross domestic product (GDP) was lower than that of India. The all-round progress witnessed in China in Maoist China before 1979 was also propelled by the push given to its education sector, following which reforms brought in by Deng Xiao Ping became possible. According to Sen, the GDP of India is certainly greater than that of Bangladesh, but Bangladesh is the only country in the world where more girls than boys have been going to schools, and it had "definitely overtaken India".

Sen was giving the 12th foundation lecture of Asian Development Research Institute (Adri) at a function otherwise held to mark the inauguration of the three-day international seminar organized by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) headed by former Union minister Dr Karan Singh and supported by ministry of external affairs (MEA). Thematically, the lecture of Sen was synchronized with the theme of the ICCR international seminar - 'Civilizational Dialogue between India and ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations)'.

His notes on Asiatic, South Asian, East Asian and South Asian identities and experiences apart, Sen, in tune with the theme of the ICCR international seminar, went back and forth in time, and presented haunting childhood memories of his years, when he was six years old and his father had gone to

Mandalay in the then Burm (present-day Myanmar) to work. The locals considered his father a Vaidya (people of the caste dealing in medicine), even as the family had abandoned the caste profession. Sen, juxtaposing his local and national impressions with their images presented in the writings of Rudyard Kipling (poem 'Mandalay') and George Orwell (in his book 'Homage to Catalonia' on Spanish civil war), said that his own personal impressions of Burma were different.

Sen recalled the local flora and fauna, people, rivers (specially the Irawady river), mountains and palaces, and also mentioned how he used to draw their images on the walls of the family house. While the locals were "happy and cheerful people, always showing their smiling faces," the nanny who took his care left an indelible impact on him. "She was very beautiful, among the most beautiful I had seen. I still remember a few Burmese words," Sen said, adding: "These impressions formed a standard of Asian identity within me that helped me in my later research."

He also said the only place outside their mainland to which the Chinese first went was ancient Nalanda University to learn. "There should be no hesitation on our part to learn from any country in Asia," Sen said.

Source: 21 July, 2012/ Times of India

Early childhood education: Learning from the Indian model

While universal Early Childhood Education (ECE) is a distant dream in Pakistan, India is running ECE as part of its Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) scheme for the last four decades and has engaged maximum children aged 3 to 6.

In Pakistan, traditionally katchi class was considered as ECE, but it faded during the last two decades in the absence of government's support through policy framework for children's admission, retention and promotion. Non-conducive environment in schools and teachers' lack of competence towards receiving and retaining children in their tender age dampened all hopes, say educationists.

Some five years ago, the federal ministry of education rose to the challenge and developed proper curriculum for the ECE and the Punjab government set up 30 ECE centres in public schools with proper infrastructure and human resources. The experiment came out to be successful and since then efforts are being made to expand this programme. The Punjab school education department has set up Kids Rooms in public schools for formalising ECE – a positive development in the right direction. Still, the ECE enrolment in private schools is higher than in public schools.

However, during a visit to New Delhi on a study tour organised by ASER Pakistan last week, this correspondent found Indian model of ECE different, as it served as a part of six objectives of ICDS scheme being run by ministry of women and child development and considered one of the world's largest and unique programmes for early childhood development.

Besides looking after adolescent girls, pregnant women, lactating mothers and infants, ICDS looks after 3 to 6-year old children's nutrition and health matters through mid-day meals and immunisation as well as laying foundation for their proper psychological, physical and social development through School Readiness Programme commonly known as ECE.

The scheme's ECE programme is being run for pre-school age group children in Anganwadi Centres (AWCs – a room or a courtyard in house), which have been set up for every 250 households across India and are considered backbone of the ICDS scheme. In Delhi alone, there are around 9,000 Anganwadis — some 100 centres in each of 90 projects.

Still, the School Readiness Programme is under criticism in India as it is failing to perform at its optimum level simply because of teachers' engagement in many duties other than teaching and training of children.

The teacher, technically called Anganwadi Worker (AWW), is supposed to fill 26 registers, conduct outdoor visits, hold women community meetings and perform other responsibilities that demand more from her than training children.

ICDS officials say that at the concept level the school readiness part of the AWCs is the joyful play-way daily activity of children aged 3 to 6 aimed at their total development in a natural, joyful and stimulating environment so that they may develop a sound foundation for cumulative lifelong learning and development.

During a visit to various AWCs in urban settings in New Delhi, it was found that in most cases there were not more than a dozen children out of almost 30 registered at any given time. Many children reach at 10am (snacks time) and return after getting their due meal.

Various Anganwadi workers say they were overworked and less paid despite the fact that their salaries were increased to Rs4,000 per month early last year.

Pointing towards a swollen bag lying on a trunk, an Anganwadi worker (AWW) in Pandit Mohalla, Kondli village told Dawn that there were 26 registers that she was supposed to fill including more than half-a-dozen for documentation on a daily basis. "Besides, there are so many outdoor activities that practically hinder teachers' focus on children's learning activities," the worker said.

The teacher, who is commonly called Didi, said she registered about 30 children, but there were never more than a dozen children at a given time. "If all 30 registered children will attend the centre, there will be no space to breath even," she said dejectedly.

While ICDS Delhi Director Rajiv Kale did not comment on the subject despite several attempts, Child Development Project Officer Saroj Chopra said girls were making issue out of nothing. She said Unicef recently reduced the volume of prescribed records. But, she said: "Some records are essential to be documented."

Ms Chopra said people had yet to understand the importance of Anganwadis for Early Childhood Education. She said many parents did get their children registered with AWCs, but do not send them for full two hours. "The parents do not consider Anganwadis as pre-schools because they are not under any pressure of getting their wards' names struck off," she said. For this reason, she said, workers and helpers continued efforts to bring children to AWCs.

About shortage of space, she said limited funds approved for accommodation on rent restricted scheme managers to engage one room or a veranda in a house in the locality.

Overall, the ICDS scheme is aimed at improving six indictors — nutritional and health status of children in the age-group 0-6 years through midday meals and immunisation; laying the foundation for their proper psychological, physical and social development; reducing the incidence of mortality, morbidity, malnutrition and school dropout; achieving effective coordination of policy and implementation amongst various departments to promote child development and enhancing the capability of the mother to look after the normal health and nutritional needs of the child through proper nutrition and health education.

Commenting on the duties, an AWW official said she was working with commitment, but the large number of duties, most of the time, marred the quality of work. "We are supposed to impart training to children to help them take on the challenge of joining formal schooling at the age of five or six years; provide supplementary nutrition to children and adolescent girls, conduct immunisation of children, health check-ups, referral services, and nutrition and health services," she added.

AWWs stressed the need of relieving them from the documentation about children as well as pregnant and lactating mothers and provide them space to perform their duties independently.

Source: 21 July, 2012/ The Dawn

Right to education legislation

One of the principles of policy as stated in Article 37(b) of 1973 Constitution of Pakistan lays down that "the state shall remove illiteracy, and provide free and compulsory secondary education within minimum possible period." This Article remained a pious wish, as provision of education was only a policy principle and not a fundamental right.The 18th Amendment of the Constitution has added Article 25(A), making the Right to Education obligatory for the state and also justiciable.

It too, however, will be enforced when a law is passed to give effect to this 'Right'. With the subject of education devolved to the provinces, now each province has to promulgate such legislation.Earlier this month, the Senate approved a Right to Education law to enforce Article 25(A) in the federal territories. None of the provinces has as yet promulgated the required legislation.Mention here may be made of the special efforts made by Unesco to help expedite the preparation of the required draft law. Former Senator S.M. Zafar deserves credit for drafting the legislation and introducing it in the Senate. The Sindh Education Department too is currently being assisted by Unesco to prepare a draft bill. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is also seized of the matter.

To understand the meaning and implications of the Right to Education (RTE) Act and the pursuant legislation, one may have a look at the provisions approved by the legislature in India. There, the Constitution was amended in 2002 while enabling legislation was passed in September 2009. The draft bill remained mired in controversy for a number of years. The constitutional amendment and the enabling legislation were opposed by the private education sector. There was criticism of a number of provisions relating to the private sector and certain aspects of the scheme of the implementation.

The private sector educators' lobby questioned the provision of 25 percent reservation for disadvantaged children in their schools and took the matter to the Supreme Court on the ground that it violated their autonomy and was a drain on their resources. The Indian Supreme Court upheld the

law (April 2012) with the observation that it shall not apply to schools run by minority groups that receive no government funds.

The main features of the Indian RTE Act are mentioned below:

Free and compulsory education to all children of India in the 6 to 14 age group;

No child shall be held back, expelled, or required to pass a board examination until completion of elementary education;

A child above six years of age who has not been admitted in any school, or though admitted could not complete his or her elementary education, then he or she shall be admitted in a class appropriate to his or her age;

Proof of age for admission:

for the purposes of admission to elementary education, the age of a child shall be determined on the basis of the birth certificate issued in accordance with the provisions of Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 1856 or on the basis of such other document, as may be prescribed. No child shall be denied admission in a school for lack of age proof;lA child who completes elementary education shall be awarded a certificate; Calls for a fixed student-teacher ratio; Will apply to all of India except Jammu and Kashmir; Provides for 25 percent reservation for economically disadvantaged communities in admission to Class One in all private schools; Mandates improvement in quality of education; School teachers will need adequate professional degree within five years or else will lose job; School infrastructure (where there is problem) to be improved in three years, else recognition cancelled; Financial burden will be shared between state and central government.

Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi's (ITA) Baela Raza, who started the first-ever Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) in Pakistan and launched the One-Million Signature campaign for RTE, organised a meeting in Lahore on July 19, 2012, to discuss the RTE legislation. The meeting was attended by a number of Senators, MPAs, Punjab Education Minister, Senior Advisor to Chief Minister, PEF Chairman, Pacade Chairman, representatives of CSOs (including Ms Nasira Iqbal) and the media. The ITA inter alia circulated in the meeting, a paper on a comparative analysis of the Indian and Pakistani RTE laws.

The Indian law is more specific about the norms and standards for the registration of schools. Minimum qualifications of the teachers too have not been clearly specified in the Senate Act. In India, teachers are prohibited to give private tuitions; in Pakistan, there is no such restriction. In Pakistan, an Education Advisory Council shall be responsible for ensuring implementation. Yet, it is not clear which body will monitor the implementation.

In India, the body that will oversee the implementation would be independent of the monitoring mechanism. While detailed guidelines for the implementation have not been provided in the Senate RTE Act; in India, guidelines for curriculum and implementation have been spelt out. A major difference between the two laws relates to the compulsory provision for free education in the private schools. In India, this requirement is 25 percent; while in Pakistan, it is only 10 percent.

Again reimbursement to private schools has not been clearly specified.The state obligations and various components of implementation would require heavy financial investment running into billions. Improved schooling will have to be provided. Better teachers with enhanced training standards and facilities would be required. Missing infrastructure facilities, including adequate buildings, drinking water, toilets, electricity etc, would have to be put in place.The Senate law lays down the following obligations of the state:lProvide free education to every child; Ensure admission of children of migrant families;lEnsure compulsory admission, attendance and completion of education; Ensure safety of travel of the child and the teacher to and from school;lEnsure availability of a neighbourhood school; Ensure that the disadvantaged child is not discriminated against and prevented from, on any grounds whatsoever, pursuing and completing education; Provide infrastructure, including school building, playgrounds, laboratories, teaching and learning material, and teaching staff; Monitor functioning of schools within its jurisdiction; Decide the academic calendar; Provide all training facilities for teachers and students; Ensure good quality education conforming to the prescribed standards and norms; Ensure timely prescribing of curriculum and courses of study for education; and Provide proper training facility for teachers.

If all the provisions are only modestly implemented, it will require a considerable revamping of the elementary education in Pakistan. The provincial governments and civil society organisations will also have to launch awareness and advocacy campaigns to sensitise and influence parents and the private sector for fully availing the opportunity of totally free education.

Source: 21 July, 2012/ The Dawn

Taking on corruption in international higher education

A spectre of corruption is haunting the global campaign towards higher education internationalisation. An overseas degree is increasingly valuable, so it is not surprising that commercial ventures have found opportunities in the internationalisation landscape.

New private actors have entered the sector, with the sole goal of making money. Some of them are less than honourable. Some universities look at internationalisation as a contribution to the financial 'bottom line', in an era of financial cutbacks.

The rapidly expanding private higher education sector globally is largely for-profit. In a few cases, such as Australia and increasingly the United Kingdom, national policies concerning higher education internationalisation tilt towards earning income for the system.

Countries whose academic systems suffer from elements of corruption are increasingly involved in international higher education – sending large numbers of students abroad, establishing relationships with overseas universities and other activities.

Corruption is not limited to countries that may have a reputation for less than fully circumspect academic practices, but that problem occurs globally.

Recent scandals

Several scandals have recently been widely reported in the United States, including the private unaccredited 'Tri-Valley University', a sham institution that admitted and collected tuition fees from foreign students.

That institution did not require students to attend class, but rather funnelled them into the labour market, under the noses of US immigration authorities. In addition, several public universities have been caught admitting students with sub-standard academic qualifications.

Quality assurance agencies in the UK have uncovered problems with 'franchised' British-degree programmes, and similar scandals have occurred in Australia.

A prominent example is the University of Wales, which was the second largest university in the UK, with 70,000 students enrolled in 130 colleges around the world. It had to close its highly profitable degree validation programme, which accounted for nearly two-thirds of institutional revenue.

With international higher education now a multibillion-dollar industry around the world – with individuals, countries and institutions depending on its income, prestige and access – it is not surprising that corruption is a growing problem.

If something is not done to ensure probity in international relationships in higher education, an entire structure – built on trust, a commitment to mutual understanding and benefits for students and researchers – a commitment built informally over decades, will collapse. There are signs that the structure is already in deep trouble.

Unscrupulous agents

A serious and unsolved problem is the prevalence of unscrupulous agents and recruiters funnelling unqualified students to universities worldwide.

A recent example was featured in Britain's Daily Telegraph in late June of an agent in China caught on video, offering to write admissions essays and to present other questionable help in admission to prominent British universities.

No one knows the extent of the problem, although consistent news reports indicate that it is widespread, particularly in countries that send large numbers of students abroad, including China and India.

Without question, agents now receive millions of dollars in commissions paid by universities and, in some egregious cases, money from the clients as well. In the University of Nottingham's case the percentage of students recruited through agents has increased from 19% of the intake in 2005 to 25% in 2011, with more than £1 million (US$1.5 million) going to the agents.

Altered and fake documents

Altered and fake documents have long been a problem in international admissions. Computer design and technology exacerbate it. Fraudulent documents have become a minor industry in some parts of the world, and many universities are reluctant to accept documents from institutions that have been tainted with incidents of counterfeit records.

For example, a number of American universities no longer accept applications from some Russian students because of widespread perceptions of fraud, document tampering and other problems.

Document fraud gained momentum due to commission-based agents who have an incentive to ensure that students are 'packaged' with impressive credentials, as their commissions depend on successful student placement.

Those responsible for checking the accuracy of transcripts, recommendations and degree

certificates face an increasingly difficult task. Students who submit valid documentation are placed at a disadvantage since they are subjected to extra scrutiny.

Examples of tampering with and falsifying results of the Graduate Record Examination and other commonly required international examinations used for admissions have resulted in the nullifying of scores, and even cancelling examinations in some countries and regions, as well as rethinking whether online testing is practical.

This situation has made it more difficult for students to apply to foreign universities and has made the task of evaluating students for admission more difficult.

Several countries, including Russia and India, have announced that they will be using the Times Higher Education and Academic Ranking of World Universities (Shanghai rankings) as a way of determining the legitimacy of foreign universities for recognising foreign degrees, determining eligibility for academic collaborations and other aspects of international higher education relations.

This is unfortunate, since many excellent academic institutions are not included in these rankings, which mostly measure research productivity. No doubt, Russia and India are concerned about the quality of foreign partners and find the rankings convenient.

Visa rules

Several 'host' countries have tightened up rules and oversight of cross-border student flows in response to irregularities and corruption.

The US Department of State announced in June 2012 that visa applicants from India would be subjected to additional scrutiny as a response to the 'Tri-Valley scandal'. Earlier both Australia and Britain changed rules and policy.

Corruption is making internationalisation more difficult for the entire higher education sector. It is perhaps significant that continental Europe seems to have been less affected by shady practices – perhaps in part because international higher education is less commercialised and profit driven.

The internet has become the 'Wild West' of academic misrepresentation and chicanery. It is easy to set up an impressive website and exaggerate the quality or lie about an institution.

Some institutions claim accreditation that does not exist. There are even 'accreditation mills' to accredit universities that pay a fee. A few include pictures of impressive-looking campuses that are simply photoshopped from other universities.

What can be done?

With international higher education now big business and with commercial gain an ever-increasing motivation for international initiatives, the problems mentioned are likely to persist. However, a range of initiatives can ameliorate the situation.

The higher education community can recommit to the traditional 'public good' values of internationalisation, although current funding challenges may make this difficult in some countries.

The International Association of Universities' recent report,Affirming Academic Values in Internationalisation of Higher Education, is a good start. The essential values of the European Union's Bologna Initiatives are also consistent with the best values of internationalisation.

Accreditation and quality assurance are essential for ensuring that basic quality is recognised. Agencies and the international higher education community must ensure that universities are carefully evaluated and that the results of assessment are easily available to the public and to international stakeholders.

Governmental, regional and international agencies must coordinate their efforts and become involved in maintaining standards and protecting the image of the higher education sector.

Contradictions abound. For example, the US Department of State's Education USA seeks to protect the sector, while the Department of Commerce sees higher education just as an export commodity. Government agencies in the UK and Australia seem also to be mainly pursuing commercial interests.

Consciousness-raising about ethics and good practice in international higher education and awareness of emerging problems and continuing challenges deserve continuing attention.

Prospective students and their families, institutional partners considering exchanges and research, and other stakeholders must be more sophisticated and vigilant concerning decision-making.

The Boston College Center for International Higher Education's Corruption Monitor is the only clearinghouse for information relating directly to corrupt practices; additional sources of information and analysis would be helpful.

The first step in solving a major challenge to higher education internationalisation is recognition of the problem itself.

The higher education community is by no means united, and growing commercialisation makes some people reluctant to act in ways that may threaten

profits. There are individuals within the academic community who lobby aggressively to legitimise dubious practices.

Yet, if nothing is done, the higher education sector worldwide will suffer and the impressive strides taken toward internationalisation will be threatened.

Source: 22 July, 2012/University World News

Education loans, no charity aid

*Loans cannot be claimed as a matter of right. Banks must practise sound commercial logic while serving a noble social cause. T*he percentage of default is found to be higher in loans without security and guarantor

A loan is a debt. The borrower is obliged to pay back or repay the lender at a later period. But it is surprising to note that in India, in the light of directed lending, many a loan is looked upon as charity — "a voluntary help to those in need".

After the agricultural debt relief scheme implemented by the Central government a couple of years ago, recovery in farm loans has become a thorny issue for bankers as the beneficiaries expect some further waiver schemes to absolve them of all their liabilities.

The CMD of a public sector bank actively involved in agricultural lending has reportedly stated that 47 per cent of farm loans have become NPAs. The latest entry to the charity club is the education loan portfolio.

For Indian banks, the outstanding education loans are reported to be around Rs 50,000 crore. The four southern States account for a major share of the loans. The percentage of NPAs is estimated to be above 5.5 per cent. As majority of the loans are under the moratorium period for starting repayment, the NPAs are bound to go up in the coming years.

Education loans are classified as priority sector and are to be encouraged. These loans are to be treated as investment for future economic development and prosperity. Most of the developed and developing countries have student loan schemes.

FROM AID TO RIGHT

In India, the education loan scheme was originally started to help meritorious students pursue higher education in technical and professional courses.

However, over the years, rules and regulations got diluted and any student who got admission in a course became eligible for a loan, irrespective of the marks or the process employed in admission.

Education loans started to be viewed increasingly as a financial assistance, not to be repaid. Though such loans are a boon for the poor meritorious students, they are becoming a political issue, particularly in politically sensitive States such as Kerala.

The recent arrest and detention of the branch manager of a private sector bank in Kottayam, in connection with the suicide of a nursing student allegedly due to non release of education loan by the bank, has become a controversial issue. Politicians, irrespective of the colour of their flags, are demanding sanction of education loans to all applicants as a matter of right.

The existing loan schemes of the banks in India are generally on liberal terms. Loans up to Rs 10 lakh can be given for studies in India and up to Rs 20 lakh for studies abroad. Loans up to Rs 4 lakh are given without any guarantor or collateral.

The rates of interest generally range 1-3 per cent above base rates. Many banks give further relaxation in interest to girl students and students paying interest regularly during moratorium period.

The loans can be repaid in instalments up to 84 months, starting one year after completion of studies or six months after getting employed, whichever is earlier.

However, the defaults in education loans are increasing. Large numbers of student borrowers are not able to get jobs within one year. In many cases, salaries are not sufficient to ensure repayments. This is particularly true in the case of nursing students who avail loan amounts disproportionate to their future earning capacity. In fact, some unscrupulous institutes fix their fees depending upon the quantum of security-free education loan of banks.

The high incidence of failure in examinations, such as that in engineering courses, also creates a large number of overdue loans. But there are borrowers who simply do not pay, in spite of getting lucrative jobs.

The percentage of default is found to be higher in loans without security and guarantor. Banks often face problems in tracking the beneficiaries after the course.

IBA GUIDELINES

Considering the potential damage that NPAs in education loans can cause to the economy, the Indian Banks Association has come out with fresh guidelines on granting of education loans. The guidelines underline the basic banking principle that loans, including educational loans, cannot be claimed as a matter of right. It is to be left to the discretion of bankers to decide whom to lend to and

how much to lend, of course based on transparent rules.

The IBA has urged banks to put in place an effective appraisal system based on sound commercial logic, while serving a noble social cause.

Only students admitted to recognised institutes by a merit-based selection process will be eligible for loans.

This will eliminate a large number of students selected in management seats paying capitation fees and donations. Banks must introduce a system to assess the employability of the student after the course.

Banks may use rating of education institutes and the individual student as a tool for improving the asset quality.

Highly rated students in highly rated institutions may be granted loans at lower rates.

Scholarships, concessions, etc, have to be taken into account while fixing the quantum of the loan. Vocational/skill development courses of duration of two months to three years also will become eligible for loans.

Repayment periods are being increased to 10 years for loans up to Rs 7.5 lakh and up to 15 years for loans above Rs 7.5 lakh.

Parent/guardian shall join as co-borrower even for loans up to Rs 4 lakh. For better monitoring, banks may advise the students to submit their PAN details during the course.

The revised guidelines may step up the recovery of the loans.

However, results will depend upon the general awareness and change of attitude towards education loans. Parents and students have to use this facility only on genuine need and only to the extent actually required.

Source: 22 July, 2012/ The Hindu Business Line

How India can achieve its target of gross enrolment ratio in higher education

Every sector of the economy is feeling the heat of global slowdown, but one segment, which remains unaffected by difficult times, globally, is higher education. This is because higher education is linked with the aspirations of people.

In the last two decades, the number of engineering colleges, business schools and enrolments has gone up phenomenally in India. This is so because there is demand from people and industry. There is a link between what industry wants and what parents send their children to colleges for.

The government has set a target of gross enrolment ratio (GER) in higher education of 30% by 2020 With a current GER of 20% already achieved, this target appears eminently attainable. However, India should aspire for a higher GER considering that this ratio in developed countries is 50-60 %.

Private sector is increasingly being exhorted by the government to step up investment in this field but, we should remember that almost 85-90 % funding for professional colleges in our country even today is from private sector.

These are self-financing colleges. But no money has gone in to public-private partnerships. Funds from government are skewed towards central institutes while state institutes are starved of resources. State governments do not provide funds for their universities and instead expect them to make do with fees. Given the shortage of funds, private sector investment should be facilitated.

Two, trying to increase GER will be impossible without teachers. There is a universal shortage of faculty in both public and private institutes. To overcome this, teacher qualification norms should be relaxed . The National Knowledge Commission has pointed out that an MTech may not be required for teaching and that BTech graduates may be hired with a commitment to do an MTech within three to four years of their joining.

We have to give teachers, who join without adequate higher qualifications, access to further studies through distance education. There have to be avenues for top 10 courses through distance mode. People coming from industry may not be PhDs, but they have more practical knowledge. Similar relaxation has to be given for humanities courses.

When it comes to research, we have to learn to differentiate between the requirements for research and teaching. Everybody need not do research. Industry requires a large number of people at graduate level — production, operations, monitoring, etc. It does not require too many research candidates. We have to see where it is relevant. Auto sector has done a lot of research in recent years. Ten years ago, it was zero. Pharma is doing it. Industry will not invest in research unless there is a requirement.

Another hot topic of discussion these days is the so called low-employability quotient of our graduates. The main reason for this is low focus on communication skills. In small towns and rural areas, children at school level are taught in the local language and there is little attention to English. When they enter higher education , language, therefore, becomes a major issue. To address this,

communication skill training should start at the school level. Students should be enabled , at least from higher secondary level, to acquire proficiency in presentation and writing skills, in both English and local languages.

One more reason for low-employability of graduates is poor linkages between academia and industry . We at CII are conscious of the fact that as the country's largest industry organisation, we carry the onerous responsibility of working on bridging this gap. Towards that end we have set up a University-Industry Congress under which we are doing a survey of engineering colleges, along with the All India Council for Technical Education, to map their linkages with industry.

The way forward is deregulation. There are too many restrictions, which need to be removed. The system should be allowed to grow from demand. After all, it is paid for by the parents, not the government . It should therefore be deregulated to a point where there is enough competition to bring down the cost for students. Online content can be used to bring down costs. E-learning has to be increased . There is also a need to involve reputed overseas higher education providers in the Indian education system. This will stem the tide of students going overseas and preserve foreign exchange.

It will also add competition internally and bring new ideas and methods into higher education . There is enough space for several models to operate in the best interests of our talented students. Universities need to be given complete autonomy. The law allows it. Due to a variety of supplemental instructions, this has been taken away.

Unlike Right to Education (RTE), any new mechanism should not end up creating more problems for parents. More deregulation, use of technology, simplification of rules, allowing colleges to compete and co-operate , greater incentives for private sector participation in higher education and liberal terms for entering into publicprivate partnerships are the way forward in higher education.

Source: 23 July, 2012/Times of India

Imbalances plague education

There are several imbalances in the higher education system in India and these continue to plague the system, coming in the way of the nation's progress, M. Anandakrishnan, Chairman, Board of Governors, Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur, said on Monday.

"Though the education system is moving closer to the core of development thinking, there are ridiculous imbalances all over India," the former Anna University Vice-Chancellor said. He was speaking during the inauguration of a three-day national conference on Indian Higher Education – Contemporary Challenges and Perspectives, at Madras Christian College.

Somehow the whole country was brainwashed into believing that sending young people to study engineering and medicine alone was enough and in the process, ignoring history, fine arts and literature among many other disciplines, he added.

Mike Nithavrianakis, British Deputy High Commissioner to Southern India, said foreign educational institutions should not look at India as a "pipeline for student recruitment" and that they should engage in long-term relationships based on trust and values. .

William Sweet, Director of the Centre for Philosophy, Theology and Cultural Traditions at St. Francis Xavier University, Nova Scotia, Canada, Kulbir Singh, Postmaster General, Business Development, Technology and Marketing, Tamil Nadu Circle, and others also participated.

Source: 24 July, 2012/The Hindu

Panel wants technical courses through distance learning

A government committee tasked to suggest measures to regulate the standards of distance education has recommended that technical and professional courses, like engineering, be offered through distance learning mode.

Keeping such courses out of distance learning, the committee headed by Prof Madhav Menon has said, "will be against the accepted policy of the Government of India of expanding opportunities for higher education and making it inclusive as an instrument of democratising education and making it a life long process".

The committee has also called for making a degree earned through distance learning equivalent to a conventional degree and for legislation-backed regulation of the vast distance and open learning sector, which will be key to raising India's Gross Enrolment Ratio of India to 30 per cent by 2020.

Data quoted by the panel shows that about 36 lakhs students are enrolled in distance learning courses or about 21.9 per cent of the 136.42 lakhs students taking conventional courses. Nearly 52 per cent of the students in open universities are from rural areas.

Besides, against 41 per cent women in the conventional system, the percentage of women enrolled in open universities is about 40 per cent.

Enrolment in distance learning courses (16.3 per cent) grew faster than in the conventional system (5.6 per cent) between 1975-76 and 2008-09. However, enrolment in technical and professional courses in the open system is less than 10 percent.

The All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) has been resisting opening up technical education to distance learning, arguing this will compromise the quality of education in absence of standards.

The Menon committee, therefore, has said an effective regulatory system must be put in place before opening up technical education to distance learning.

The HRD Ministry has accepted the recommendations and asked the AICTE to set up a committee to formulate such standards.

Source: 24 July, 2012/Indian Express

Empowering young India with digital education

CBSE has instructed affiliated schools to set up digital classrooms from primary to secondary level for every subject

Generations today are calculated at six-year intervals. An 18-year old is conceivably thought to be part of one generation while a 12-year old is part of another. This difference has been validated in light of the rapid use of technology and fundamental changes from the way kindergarten games are designed to the role that technology plays in classrooms.

Digital classrooms have modernised teaching by providing teachers a broad, flexible and agile methodology to streamline their teaching and make it more meaningful. For students, digital classrooms make learning more interesting and enjoyable. Their overall attitude towards learning becomes positive. Theoretical subjects like history and geography become more interesting with visual aids, and overall information retention becomes much higher. Audio-visual learning enables them to understand and retain even difficult concepts better.

The transition from paper to pixel is rapidly growing across the globe, primarily because there's a strong belief that digital classrooms are the way to the future. Over 90% of schools in developed countries like the UK, US and Australia are using technology-enabled interactive whiteboards. South Korea is taking huge steps in implementing educational technology for the younger K-12 segment. The South Korean government is making an investment of about $2.4 billion in K-12 schools to implement digital textbooks by 2015.

Public schools throughout Australia are benefiting from the federal government's $2.5 billion Digital Education Revolution initiative that provides up-to-date technology such as interactive whiteboards and virtual classrooms. Top 15 educational technology companies in the US are discussing how to make digital classrooms a reality in schools across America within the next five years.

In a twist to the traditional game of playing catch-up with the first world, India has been off the block much earlier than expected on this score. Call it providence, or chance or a result of the deeply ingrained value of education in our cultural milieu, our thrust was timely. But are tailwinds in our favour?

In India, too, many schools are experimenting with technology. Educomp has already established digital classrooms in over 12,000 schools spread across 560 districts in the country and the number is growing at almost 20 schools a day. Analysts expect this market to grow 10 times in the next five years.

And if you thought digital education was happening only in the privately-run schools, look more closely at government schemes. The objective of the central scheme ICT@Schools is "to provide opportunities to secondary stage students to develop Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills and also for ICT-aided learning process. It enables widespread availability of access devices, connectivity to the Internet and promotion of ICT literacy." Under the scheme, the Union government provides 75% of financial assistance to the states/UTs. The balance 25% of funds are contributed by the state/UT governments. Most states have come up with their own vision, mission and implementation plans for ICT@Schools, and the work is on.

The case for digital education for young India is so strong that school boards too are taking concrete steps to increase the adoption of digital education in schools. For instance, the Central Board of Secondary Education has instructed affiliated schools to set up digital classrooms from primary to secondary level for every subject. The board issued instructions to all the school principals stating that after CCE evaluation system, the schools should now have digital classrooms.

The board is also very clear on how it wants digital education to be embraced by schools and students. As per its directive, every student must have significant knowledge of computers and the internet. Every digital classroom should have a big

screen projector for stress-free readability. Every classroom should have electronic interactive whiteboard system, along with a computer and UPS, and a digital library for every subject. Every class should have an electronic response system to calculate the time taken by students to understand the lesson and a resource person to help teachers in digital classrooms.

The directives are clear indicators that at a broad level our policymakers have accepted the criticality of digital education and have, in fact, indicated a definite roadmap for the future. But, as always, the challenge is not the definition of the policy framework, it is the implementation and target outcomes that are a cause of concern.

A lot has been talked about digital education, digital classrooms, smart boards, etc. A lot is being done about the adoption of digital education at private, government and school levels but, unfortunately, this adoption is more cosmetic than deep. Most schools, including the privately-run chains in urban areas, still have only a handful of digital classrooms. At the government level, too, under the ICT@Schools scheme, the minimum eligibility criteria is the conversion of one school per district into a smart school, subject to the availability of funds.

But is this enough to impart wholesome digital education to our children? A no-brainer, we know it is not. The solution lies in converting every conventional classroom to a digital classroom. In effect, we need to plan for an overhaul, rather than aim for symbolic transition which may or may not happen depending on resources at the school level.

The challenge at hand is sizeable and requires significant investments in various aspects that will impact this transformation. And it can't happen overnight. To begin with, we need a couple of things. First is a qualified and stated intent to convert all classrooms into digital classrooms with a cut-off date. Second is to create a clear roadmap to implement it. Unless a school decides that, say, in next five years all its classrooms will be digital classrooms, the change will never happen. More than the cost of implementation, training and adoption of a completely new teaching methodology by a school is a huge decision, and a huge change. It can only happen if there is a buy-in of both the school management and teachers. Schools have to stop looking at digital classrooms as mere showpieces to be displayed to parents during admissions. A digital classroom has to become the bare-minimum teaching accessory in schools like a blackboard is today.

Apart from the initiative of schools, more explicit advocacy from state and central governments coupled with a sense of urgency and palpable pressure is also a pre-requisite. Parent associations, too, must demand faster conversion to digitalisation to ensure that no child is left behind. That done, I believe the industry is fully capable of rising to the occasion and playing its part in this transformational enterprise.

A few years from now, students who are not computer literate, despite having degrees and diplomas, will still be called illiterate, because by then the rest of the world would have moved much ahead with digital education, and our children will be left behind, despite having completed at least 14 years of school education.

What is required is that schools should go digital in the true sense and that students should get to learn every subject in a digital classroom. Only then can we say that a digital revolution has occurred. Only then can we claim our students to be on par with the rest of the world.

Source: 23 July, 2012/Indian Express

Experts discuss problems in providing pre-school education

Neuroscience researchers have found that 80% of the human brain develops by the age of four years and 90% develops by the age of six.

This was revealed at a two-day national-level workshop which began here on Tuesday to discuss 'Quality pre-school learning programme in rural areas'. Representatives of 17 states are participating in the workshop to discuss various problems in providing pre-school education to the children and solutions for those problems.

Addressing the workshop, education specialist Venita Kaul said, "According to a survey children who have been to pre-schools retain 15-20% better than those who did not have access to pre-schools." She said while 80% of the human brain develops by the age of four 90% develops by the age of six. Unfortunately, in Jharkhand many children are deprived of pre-schooling.

State head of Unicef Job Zacariah said, "Out of 22 lakh children between the 3-6 age group, 13 lakh go to anganwadi centres and three lakh go to pre-schools. The remaining children are not enrolled anywhere."

Zacariah said, "The percentage of dropout from primary schools is around 20% out of which most are children from rural areas who have not been to pre-schools. That is why it is necessary to discuss the implementation of pre-schooling in rural areas."

The main challenge in the field of implementation of pre-schooling in rural areas is the language barrier. Urmila Sarkar, education chief of Unicef, said: "In Jharkhand, language is a major issue. So programmes in tribal areas should be different. In pre-school, a transition from mother tongue to other languages should be taught but the basic mode of communication should be the mother tongue."

Explaining the other hurdles faced in proper application of pre-schooling, Zacariah said, "There is no proper curriculum for pre-schools. Also, lack of qualified teachers becomes a problem as they are not able to help the children in their overall development. The third problem is the unavailability of proper study and play materials."

Jharkhand Education Project Council with Unicef had launched a pre-school kit named 'Ankur' which is at present being used at 1,200 anganwari centres of the state. It will be increased to 3,600 centres.

Zacariah said, "The kit is based on theories of learning. It has a curriculum and picture dictionary in nine tribal languages so that the students understand what they are being taught. Also the teachers of local schools keep visiting the anganwari centres where the programme is held so the children are familiar with them and wouldn't hesitate when they join the mainstream schools."

HRD minister Baidyanath Ram, who was present, said, "The ideas and suggestions which come out from the discussions will be implemented by the government to improve the state education system."

Source: 24 July, 2012/Times of India

Quality pre-school education will reduce dropout rate

The two-day national conference on 'Quality Pre-School Learning Programmes in Rural Areas' threw light on the fact that quality pre-school education improves learning by 40 per cent and reduces dropouts by 20 per cent.

Organised jointly by the Department of Social Welfare and Women and Child Development (SWWCD)and the Human Resource Department, along with UNICEF the conference had experts and academicians from UNICEF, UNESCO, NCERT, CARE and officials from Union and State Government.

Addressing the experts from national and international agencies State HRD Minister Baidyanath Ram said, "Right to Education Act doesn't provide for education of children below six years of age. Universal enrolment and good learning outcome in primary schools can be achieved only if we provide quality pre-school education in Anganwadi centres. The RTE Act guarantees 25 per cent reservation for deprived children in private schools, but this will be useful only if these children have received pre-school education." Getting elementary education between six to 14 years of age is a child's right but pre-school education is not yet covered under Right to Education. Studies show that one rupee invested in pre-school education of a child would in return give of Rs 13 in his life.

"Efforts are on to convert Anganwadi centres to pre-nursery schools. State Government has developed quality pre-education programme called 'Ankur' with learning material and curriculum for pr-school education in Anganwadi centres in Jharkhand," said Bimla Pradhan, Minister SWWCD.

Stressing on the need to improve access, quality and equity in pre-school education UNICEF chief in Jharkhand Job Zachariah said, "There are about seven crore children of three to six years of age in India, out of which, about 3.5 crore children attend Anganwadi pre-schools. A large number of children do not attend pre-school, mostly from SC, ST and other marginalised communities. This affects the learning outcome and retention of these children in primary schools."

He also said that to strengthen the pre-school education there is a need to bring convergence between Anganwadi and schools. Pre-school education is the foundation for lifelong learning and human development.

For minimising the number of school dropouts Jharkhand unit of UNICEF has prepared picture dictionaries in nine tribal languages. These dictionaries will soon be distributed in schools according to the local language used in that area.

Experts from different States shared their States' approach to developmentally appropriate programme for children. They said that first should be enabled before they enable children.

The Ranchi declaration will be chalked out with the recommendations on how to improve quality, equity and access in pre-school education on Wednesday.

Source: 25 July, 2012/The Pioneer

Can Odisha become the education hub of India?

Odisha of late has got its share of centres of excellence be it an IIT for technical education; a NIFT for education in textiles & fashion, an AIIMS for medical education, IOMA for mathematics and application, a Central University (in KBK region) for traditional disciplines and so on and so forth and trying hard for a world class innovation university;

as India struggles to try and bring in the Ivy League bill.

This makes Odisha in general and Bhubaneswar in particular a preferred choice for education, especially in the Eastern Part of India. But, can Odisha make its presence felt at the national level and compete with the likes of Delhi in the years to come and emerge as a hub in India both in School & Mass education as well as Higher education?

The biggest impediment to this is quality educators. If the state is able to rope in the best teachers and provide a conducive environment for them to thrive it will no longer be a distant dream.

Teachers make the highest impact on quality in the classroom. They are at the heart of education but the status of overall teacher education in India itself, leave alone Odisha, is pathetic; to put it mildly.

While good teachers can make a lifelong positive impact on a child, a sadistic teacher will bully and make classroom lessons a child's nightmare.

Odisha needs to make a beginning to address the issue of both pre-service and in-service teacher education and develop a framework for their education.

A majority of teacher education colleges in the state are resorting to malpractices - allowing students to register for the programme at a fee and collecting certificates at the end of the year without attending classes. An independent quality assessment of such institutions is needed to close down the bogus ones.

We need high quality teacher educators. The vicious cycle of poor quality in-service teacher development begins with the absence of high quality teacher educators. If the existing capacity of teachers has to be enhanced, the state must develop at least 1000 high quality teacher educators, who would effectively shoulder this responsibility both at school level and at higher education level.

A school principal and an institutional head can make or break a school/college/university. Today, there is no prerequisite for a teacher being promoted as head teacher/institution head, nor is any special input given to build such capacity. The government must ensure that all institutional heads/school leaders in the state are covered by an intensive programme of development and the process is planned and not adhoc as at present, motivated by political compulsions.

Education functionaries also need to be well equipped. Functionaries are responsible for supporting from outside - ensuring quality infrastructure, maintaining the right teacher-pupil ratio and facilitating a smooth flow of incentives, textbooks, quality food etc.

The government must ensure that management development programme covers all education functionaries, enabling them to have the necessary education perspective from a gobal, competencies in their respective roles and the social orientation to deal with children emerging from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. This being addressed Odisha can become the education hub of India.

Source: 26 July, 2012/Orissa Diary

Education key to golden age

The 13th President of India, Mr Pranab Mukherjee, said "education is the true alchemy that can bring India its next golden age".

"I envisage an India where unity of purpose propels the common good, where Centre and state are driven by the single vision of good governance, where every revolution is green, where democracy is not merely the right to vote once in five years but to speak always in the citizen's interest, where knowledge becomes wisdom, where the young pour their phenomenal energy and talent into collective cause," the President said.

He reminded the gathering whose majority included top leaders of political parties, MPs, chief ministers and governors that "we are all, across the divide of party and region, partners at the altar of our motherland".

A modern nation is built on some basic fundamentals: democracy or equal rights for every citizen; secularism or equal freedom to every faith; equality of every region and language; gender equality and perhaps most important of all economic equity. For our development to be real, the poorest of our land must feel that they are part of the narrative of rising India," Mr Mukherjee said.

His speech was punctuated by repeated thumping of desks and applause.

"I am deeply moved by the high honour you have accorded to me. Such honour exalts the occupant of this office, even as it demands that he rises above personal or partisan interests in the service of the national good," he said.

"There is no greater reward for a public servant than to be elected the first citizen of our republic," Mr Mukherjee said.

He stressed that India's true story is the partnership of people maintaining "our wealth has been created by farmers and workers, industrialists and service-providers, soldiers and civilians."

Mr Mukherjee ended his speech saying "there can be no greater reward for a public servant than becoming the First Citizen of the country."

Seventy-six-year-old Mukherjee was administered the oath of office to "preserve, protect and defend the Constitution and law" by Chief Justice of India Sarosh Homi Kapadia at a grand ceremony.

Mr Mukherjee took the oath in English in the name of God to a thunderous applause and thumping of desks by those in the packed Central Hall that included vice president Hamid Ansari, Speaker Meira Kumar, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and outgoing President Pratibha Patil.

The gathering also included Cabinet ministers, leaders of Opposition, UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi, governors, chief ministers, MPs and diplomats.

Just after he took oath, he was offered a 21-gun salute marking the assumption of office of the highest constitutional post in the country.

Before the function in Parliament, the outgoing President and the President-elect, wearing a black achkan, churidar (long coat, pyjama), drove a small distance in the bullet-proof presidential limousine from the North Court to the forecourt of Rashtrapati Bhavan.

Ms Patil received the last guard of honour from the horse mounted Presidential Body Guards (PBG) and then the two drove down the Raisina Hill to nearby Parliament House in a procession accompanied by the PBG.

Source: 26 July, 2012/Asian Age

Higher education: India lags behind China despite English language advantage

Despite the English language advantage and the government's enhanced focus on higher studies, India's top educational and research institutes, including the IITs and IIMs, lag Chinese universities in global ranking.

The Times Higher Education World University Rankings has nine universities from China in its 2012 list of Top 400 compared with just one from India. Another latest ranking by Guardian Higher Education Network shows nine Chinese universities among top 50 Asian universities, while no university from India makes it to the list.

China has been consistently scoring over India in higher education for several years, as reflected even in previous rankings.

The Times ranking, based on five broad parameters: teaching, research, citations, industry income or innovation and international outlook in terms of staff, students and research, covers subjects including engineering and technology, arts and humanities, health, life sciences, physical sciences and social sciences.

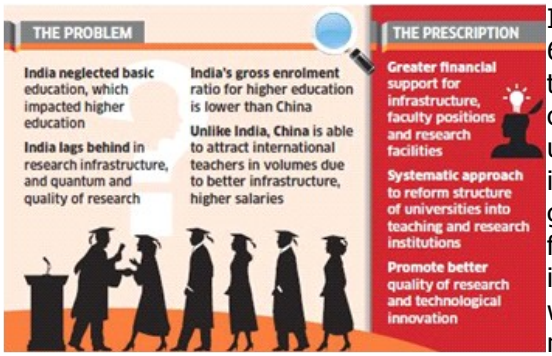
"China has invested heavily in infrastructure, research resources and that too from local councils and state bodies, not just from central government," says Anil Gupta, professor and founder, Honey Bee Network, IIM-Ahmedabad.

The draft document of the 12th Five Year Plan proposes to increase investment on higher education to 25% of all government education spending, or 1.5% of GDP from the current 18% and 1.12% respectively. An increase of 0.38% of GDP means an additional allocation of about Rs25,000 crore to higher education for the Centre and the states together.

On the other hand, China's expenditure in education from the central public budget reached more than 1.2 trillion yuan ($191 billion) during January-November last year, an increase of 25.8% from previous year, according to reports.

"The biggest gap (for India) lies in the quantum of research. A systematic approach needs to be taken to reform the structure of universities into teaching and research institutions," says Devang V Khakhar, director, IIT-Bombay. He sees a need for a significantly greater financial support for infrastructure, faculty positions and research facilities.

AUGC report "Higher Education in India at a Glance" paints a dismal picture on student enrolment. While 86% of students complete graduation, mere 12% opt for post-graduate education and barely 1% go for research.



In the past 60 years, the number of universities in India has grown 30 folds to 634 in 2011, while the numbers of colleges are 33,023, averaging 55 colleges per university, the UGC report shows. This is leading to huge pressure on the university administration in managing these institutions.

However, despite having one of the largest higher education system in the world — in terms of the number of seats of higher education and students enrolled — few Indian institutions have earned global distinction amid shortage of faculty and poor infrastructure.

While lack of ability to lure global faculty due to resource constraints is pulling down Indian universities in global ranking, China's huge investment on higher education enables it to attract international faculty and students.

"China has made huge investment in its scientific diaspora. It has made huge investment in higher education, by providing opportunities in terms of labs, machinery, salaries, etc, in an attempt to attract back Chinese scientists who earlier left the country to work in countries like the US," says David Johnson, dean, St Anthony's College, Oxford University.

Experts say India needs to attract Indian and international teachers to Indian universities to improve quality, spend (both private and public) more on higher education and research and utilise the funds more efficiently.

"India neglected basic education and skills since independence and concentrated on few like IITs, IIMs. India has a future if we use demographic dividend effectively with better education and skill improvement.

Less political interference is also needed," says S Mahendra, director, IGIDR. Plus, we do not see enough research publications from India that make it to international journals on social sciences and higher education, he adds.

Source: 27 July, 2012/Times of India

Higher Education Bill intended to strengthen education system

Union Human Resource Development Minister Kapil Sibal has said the proposed Higer Eduction and Research Bill 'intended solely to strengthen the higher education system' and for prescribing minimum standard of education for grant of degree.

The proposed bill aims to subsume the functions of the UGC, AICTE, AICTI, NCTI and DEC, he said in a letter to Bihar State Bar Council.

The bill, Sibal said, will not be in the way of the Bar Council of India or the State Bar Council, which will continue to exercise its powers of inspection of law institutions awarding LLB degree for maintaining the standard of legal education.

The bill will also not interfere in the regulation of disciplinary powers of these bodies, Officiating Secretary Ashok Kumar said quoting letter from Sibal. He also offered to discuss the matter with the representative of the Bar Council of India and its state bodies and explain the issues relating to the proposed bill.

Baleshwar Prasad Sharma, Chairman of Bihar State Bar council said the letter bears Sibal's signature but it is without date or any reference number.

Quoting J R Sharma, Secretary of the Bar Council of India, Kumar said a considerable number of BCI members and representatives of the state Bar Council will sit on dharna at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi on August 8, the opening day of the monsoon session of Parlaiment against the bill.

Source: 28 July, 2012/Indian Express

Indian education in state of emergency: Amartya Sen

Commenting on the state of education and other human development indices in India, Prof Amartya Sen on Monday likened it to a state of 'emergency'.

The Nobel laureate pointed out that not only Japan and Korea but also other South Asian countries like Singapore, Hong Kong and Thailand have taken a lead in providing quality education to their people. "While they took a lead... we were left behind and we have paid a huge price for it. While Indians generally do well on high skills related jobs/issues like IT, in the middle skill segment we are very bad. This shows how the fruits of the economy are not widely shared... there is a state of emergency in terms of malnutrition and other aspects of human development. From being the second best in South Asia on the human development index, we are now the second worst and that too thanks to Pakistan. Bangladesh has also overtaken us on most indices," he said.

Sen was speaking at a deliberation on the Nalanda University moderated by Shekhar Gupta, Editor in Chief, The Indian Express.

Prof Sen, Chancellor of Nalanda International University, along with Prof Sugata Bose of Harvard University, shared his vision for the university.

"Eight hundred years ago the Nalanda university thrived in Bihar and then there was a hiatus... there is a challenge in reviving it and we have the determination to do so. Bihar government has been very speedy...Even though we did not expect it, they have made available to us a temporary building to start our campus... there is a visionary group in Bihar, headed by the Chief Minister, that wants the university to come up well and they are very supportive as is the Government of India," Sen said.

Bose, who is a member of the Board of Governors of the university, said it has been decided that two schools — School of Ecology and Environmental Studies and School of Historical Studies — will take off first. The two schools will take off in July 2014, said Bose. The university will later this year hold an

international design competition to develop the master plan and buildings for the two schools. The varsity will come up at a 467 acre site near the Rajgir hills.

Source: 31 July, 2012/Indian Express

Miles to go

It comes as no surprise that a former vice-chancellor of Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) and chairman of the distance education council (DEC) has been charge-sheeted by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). According to reports, the VC allegedly granted approval to certain universities to offer distance education courses in violation of the norms, allowing them to make huge profits.

What is astonishing, however, is that a single person has been identified for trial and punishment. A large number of individuals and institutions are associated with the corrupt management of self-financing open and distance learning (ODL) institutions, which generate considerable surplus from the fees paid by poor learners.

Education and training undoubtedly have significant socioeconomic value. Fourteen mono-mode open universities and 220 dual-mode conventional universities are in the business of providing all types and levels of education. They have established teaching shops in almost every nook and corner of the country to cater to the needs of higher education aspirants. Together they offer thousands of programmes and enrol millions of students, largely from variously deprived groups.

Due to flexibility in the policy on admissions, conduct of contact classes, examinations and fee structure, these institutions attract a large number of students and earn huge profits because of the economies of scale. There is enough scope for making private gains at the cost of the poor.

Unfortunately, ineffective monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching means the educational attainments of students are very low. That is why ODL institutions produce so many unemployable graduates, dragging down the productivity of resources.

Regulatory bodies, mainly the University Grants Commission (UGC), the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) and the DEC-IGNOU, remain oblivious to the current practices of ODL institutions. Governments, both at the Centre and the states, are well aware of the commercial activities of such institutions. They have deliberately encouraged these institutions to widen the access to educational programmes, from elementary to higher education, just to minimise the burden of financing the conventional system of education.

It is an irony that education of the poor is largely self-financed whereas education of more affluent sections of society is heavily subsidised. In a research study entitled Economics of Distance Higher Education (1992), I raised three issues. First, the money paid by highly motivated distance learners, many of whom belonged to deprived sections of society, was utilised for purposes other than meeting the requirements of quality education. Second, the money collected from students of poor families was diverted to subsidise the education of students who were more well-off and belonged to the conventional system that was highly subsidised already. Finally, in many institutions, the tuition fee charged for different programmes was much higher than the per unit cost of education. It was concluded that the distance education system in the country is highly inequitable without being efficient in the delivery of educational services. In the two decades since the study was published, the cost and finance aspects of the education system has worsened due to the commercialisation of all types and levels of education. Rampant corruption in the functioning of the education system may be attributed to this.

Needless to say, corruption in the functioning of regulatory bodies like the Medical Council of India (MCI) and AICTE has already been exposed as senior officials from these bodies are either behind the bars or facing criminal charges. The malpractices in the functioning of DEC-IGNOU have also been highlighted in the recent revelations.

Against this backdrop, the Central government faces the challenge of weeding out corruption from the functioning of educational systems. It must also lay down a strong institutional foundation to increase the responsiveness of the education sector to the manpower requirements of the knowledge economy.

Several things need to be done. The ODL institutions should not be allowed to operate beyond their defined territorial jurisdiction and offer programmes that are commonly available at recognised institutions located near the learners. In case of overlapping jurisdiction, the government should issue necessary directions to clarify the rules of the game. Duplication of efforts, with ODL institutions offering common programmes, should be avoided. Teaching shops that are established without accreditation by a credible body should be closed. The policy of diverting funds collected from distance learners to further subsidise the education

of regular students in dual mode universities should be stopped. Norms of quality assurance should be adhered to. In fact, the benefits of financial surplus should be shared and passed on to distance learners, who largely belong to underprivileged families. A thorough review of the academic and financial management of ODL institutions must be made so as to ensure equity and efficiency in the delivery of services.

Source: 31 July, 2012/Indian Express

India's Big Problem: Nurturing Entrepreneurs

India has one of the fastest growing economies in the world. It also has a significant youth population. So why doesn't the country have a substantial number of entrepreneurs?

India needs to minimize barriers and provide support that will accelerate entrepreneurial growth.

A 2011 Gallup study of 20 economic entities in Asia showed that India ranked in the bottom quartile on several important indicators of a well-functioning entrepreneurial ecosystem. Although cross-country comparisons may not be ideal because of Asia's economic, governmental, and cultural diversity, ranking in the bottom quartile across a majority of indicators does arouse major concerns.

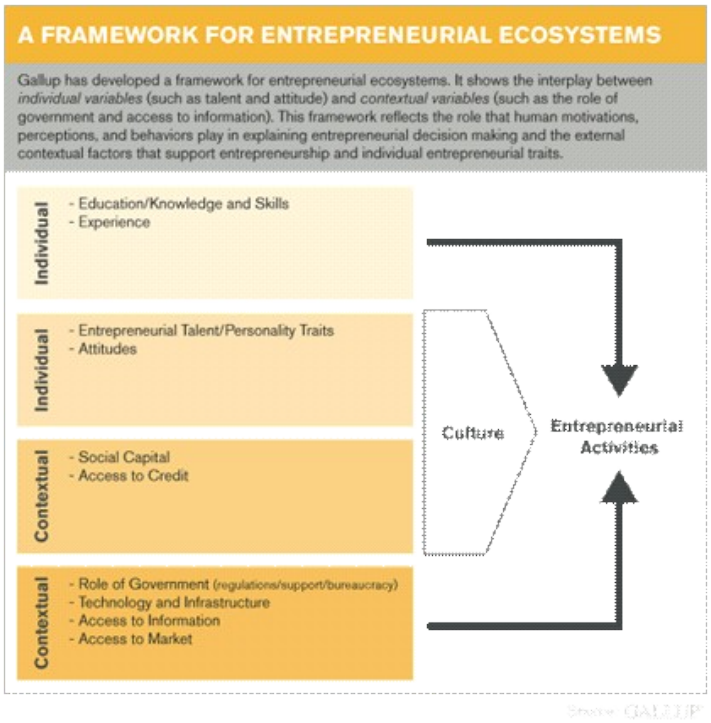
If India is to tap the entrepreneurial talent of its people, its leaders must enact significant reforms that increase support for new businesses in the formal sector.

Significant room for improvement

At a glance, you wouldn't think India has a problem. Entrepreneurs have consistently contributed to the country's vibrant growth-oriented economy since its economic liberalization in 1991. Entrepreneurship has become increasingly important in sustaining India's rapid growth.

Micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) also contribute to the country's inclusive growth and job creation. The Ministry of MSMEs estimates that between 2007 and 2010, the number of working MSMEs grew at a rate of 4.51% annually, while the number of people employed in the sector grew by 5.29% annually, and production of the sector grew at 11.48% annually. This sector contributed 8.72% of India's GDP in 2009. But as the Gallup study shows, there's significant room for improvement.

Gallup's framework for entrepreneurial ecosystems stresses the mutual interplay between *individual variables* (for example, talent and attitude) and *contextual variables* (for example, the role of government and access to information). It explicitly captures the role of human motivations, perceptions, and behaviors in explaining entrepreneurial decision making as well as the external contextual factors that support entrepreneurship and individual entrepreneurial traits.



Based on Gallup's research from March 2012, 16% of Indian adults report that they currently own a business. Of those, 22% say they formally registered their business. Half of business owners report working alone, and 47% have hired five or fewer employees. Twelve percent of all business owners say they plan to hire more employees next year, and 55% say their number of employees will stay the same.

Among Indian adults who are not business owners, 9% have thought about starting their own business. Of those, 5% plan to put their thoughts into action and start a business in the next 12 months. Clearly, India needs to minimize barriers and provide support that will accelerate entrepreneurial growth and enable entrepreneurs to satisfy an existing demand, create jobs for people other than the business owner and his or her immediate family, and contribute to the growth of India's GDP.

The key barrier to current and aspiring entrepreneurs is the lack of a robust support system. The analysis based on the Gallup framework shows that India ranked in the bottom quartile on external factors such as government support, culture, social capital, and access to training. By contrast, intrinsic factors -- such as entrepreneurial talents and attitudes -- ranked much higher than external factors in enabling

support for aspiring entrepreneurs. Improved external factors may help unlock more of the Indian population's natural entrepreneurial potential.

Entrepreneurial talent is abundant; a willingness to take risks isn't

Gallup defines an entrepreneur as an individual who proactively seeks to generate value through expansion of economic activity and who creatively responds to challenges and needs encountered in the process of accomplishing this outcome. The terms *proactively seeks* and *creatively responds* capture the talent approach to entrepreneurship, which identifies areas of strength and weakness relevant to the entrepreneurial potential of an individual.

Not every individual, even armed with training and reinforcement, can be a successful entrepreneur. Success comes more naturally to those who have inherent talent for the endeavor. Successful entrepreneurs are likely to be optimistic, goal-oriented, and persistent. When examining Indians' profiles using these criteria, the population appears to have an abundant reserve of entrepreneurial talent.

More than 60% of the Indian population possesses personality traits that are crucial for success as an entrepreneur -- such as business thinking (69%), optimism (66%), and persistence (65%) -- which suggests a wealth of entrepreneurial capacity. However, willingness to take the risk of running a business is not a common trait among a majority of Indians.

INDIANS' KEY ENTREPRENEURIAL TALENTS

India's population appears to have an abundant reserve of entrepreneurial talent, a 2012 Gallup study shows. More than 60% of the Indian population possesses personality traits that are crucial for success as an entrepreneur -- such as business thinking (69%), optimism (66%), and persistence (65%) -- which suggests a wealth of entrepreneurial capacity. But willingness to take the risk of running a business is not a common trait among a majority of Indians.

Key Statements	Percentage Who Agree
A successful business is one that makes a big profit.	69%
Even when things go wrong, you feel very optimistic.	66%*
You never give up until you reach your goals, no matter what.	65%
You would rather take a risk and build your own business than work for someone else.	39%

*2011 data

Source: GALLUP

Perceived risks may include *personal risk* (emotional strain, the unpredictability of success), *financial risk* (loss of savings, no resources to fall back on), *know-how risk* (lack of adequate knowledge and skills), or *vested interest risk* (lack of fair and transparent regulations and effective law enforcement). Though reducing these risks depends heavily on contextual support, few Indian entrepreneurs can claim that they feel comfortable taking risks as a result of robust support from the government, the public, and the entrepreneur community.

Contextual factors lag behind individual characteristics

A key problem for entrepreneurs has been finding the right type of funding.

Individual personality characteristics, behaviors, and attitudes are embedded in and influenced by cultural context, and entrepreneurs act within social and economic systems. So contextual support is as vital to the success of entrepreneurship as are individuals' characteristics, and lack of such support is the bottleneck currently holding back the formal MSME sector in India. The following four factors are of particular concern.

1. Reliable support from honest and efficient government institutions is essential.

It is not easy to start a business in India. When asked about the difficulty of starting a business, 46% of Indians say the government makes it hard to start a business, while 26% think the opposite. Little progress has been made on this front. The World Bank ranked India at 166 among 183 countries in its "Doing Business 2012: Doing Business in a More Transparent World" report, a ranking unchanged from 2011.

To some degree, widespread corruption might be contributing to the low efficiency and high costs of starting a business in India. Gallup started measuring corruption issues in India in 2006, and the results consistently indicate that more than seven in 10 Indian adults believe that corruption is widespread in government. More than six in 10 agree that corruption is widespread in business. Perceptions of widespread corruption in the business community are particularly high among current business owners (72%) and those who plan to start a business in the next 12 months (80%).

Perceptions of a corrupt business community could give business owners incentive to do unscrupulous things, such as paying bribes to get work done, which could exacerbate the lack of respect for entrepreneurs among the Indian public. Less than half (48%) of Indians consider business owners to be good role models for the country's youth, Gallup research shows.

2. Indian entrepreneurs need more diversified, localized funding at the initial stage.

The most helpful factor in becoming an entrepreneur in India is access to funding. Gallup

data show that nearly three in 10 (29%) aspirational entrepreneurs who plan to start their business in the next 12 months agree they have access to the money they need, down from 37% in 2011. This level of financial support is also significantly lower than the average for all 20 Asian economic entities Gallup polled in 2011 (44%).

India has attracted the attention of global investors in recent years because of its growth and optimistic expectations for its future. The key problem for entrepreneurs seems to be less about the availability of funding and more about finding the right type of funding. The majority of existing venture capital funds for startups are focused on export-oriented IT or mobile solutions. Few seem to facilitate startups that offer the high-demand products and services in the healthcare or energy sectors in India's massive domestic market.

Another potential problem with funding lies in the disconnect between investment funds and local entrepreneurs. Foreign investors could make inaccurate assumptions based on funding arrangements that have worked well in their home countries or other emerging markets and, in turn, ignore that India is unique in its market demands, talent supply, and business culture.

Finally, there is considerable lack of angel or seed funding and complementary assets such as investors' expertise and participation in managing startups in India. Instead, venture capitalists in India are mostly inclined to get involved at later stages, for example, by financing the expansion of existing businesses.

3. Indian entrepreneurs need more access to training and mentorship, particularly in rural areas.

Gallup's latest data show that 37% of current business owners and 28% of aspirational entrepreneurs who plan to start their business in the next 12 months know people who can give them advice about managing a business. Perhaps the best mentorship comes from successful business owners who have personal experience overcoming entrepreneurial challenges. Though India has some high-profile entrepreneurs who can serve as inspirational icons (for example, Narayana Murthy of Infosys), there are not many who offer success stories from which aspiring entrepreneurs can learn.

Apart from mentorship, Gallup also found that 22% of aspirational entrepreneurs who plan to start their business in the next 12 months have access to formal or informal training to start a business. Again, this is much lower than the Asia average of 44%.

India has taken significant steps to promote entrepreneurial education and has established a list of national institutions to provide special training for entrepreneurs. However, according to Research and Markets' 2011 report on "Entrepreneurship Education in India," in 2010, 1,500 students were being trained at institutions that are solely focused on entrepreneurial education, while 4,700 students were enrolled in entrepreneurship programs at different business schools and institutions across India. Even though enrollment doubles each year, it is far from meeting the nationwide demand for entrepreneurship training. In rural areas, where about 70% of India's population lives, residents have few chances to take advantage of these opportunities.

Entrepreneurial education also shares many of the prevalent problems regarding the general education system in India, including a shortage of quality educators and an absence of quality content, which hinder entrepreneurial growth.

4. Enforcing agreements is necessary to protect trusting business relationships.

India has a large youth population, which tends to be more willing to take risks compared to the older population.

According to the World Bank's report "Doing Business 2012: Doing Business in a More Transparent World," India ranks 182 out of 183 countries on enforcing contracts. The time needed to enforce contracts in India is almost triple the average among Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, and the cost of doing so is almost double the OECD average. Indian entrepreneurs, often strapped for cash and time, are almost powerless when business partners cheat them. Perhaps this is why Gallup data indicate that 83% of current business owners say they are the sole owner of their business, and only 16% of Indian adults believe they can find someone outside their own family to be a trusted business partner.

The lack of judicial infrastructure on enforcement does little to protect the trusting relationship between entrepreneurs and business partners or between entrepreneurs and customers. A lack of trust inhibits collaboration and significantly increases the risk an entrepreneur takes, ultimately slowing the growth of the MSME sector.

Implications for India's leaders

Limited access to training and funding, difficulties the government poses to starting a business, and lack of trusted business partners are all likely to have negative effects on the optimism and determination of Indian entrepreneurs. Despite

these barriers, Indian entrepreneurs still rank fairly high on these individual characteristics compared with residents of other countries in Asia, further indicating that they are resilient and possess the innate talents to succeed if given the necessary support.

In addition, India has a large youth population, which tends to be more optimistic and willing to take risks compared to the older population. The 2011 national census shows that more than 50% of the population of India is younger than 25. Factoring the high percentage of young people in India with India's reputation as one of the fastest growing markets in the world, there are plenty of reasons to believe in a promising entrepreneurial future for the country.

Yet the speed with which the Indian MSME sector can progress compared with other countries in Asia or emerging economies worldwide and the extent to which entrepreneurship can contribute to the growth of India depend on improvements in contextual conditions.

Areas where these conditions must improve include the government -- such as its honesty and efficiency, simplifying tax laws, reforming investment regulations, reducing the number of procedures required to start a business, and reducing the time and cost of enforcing legal contracts -- and society -- such as increasing the interactions and collaboration among investors, aspiring or existing entrepreneurs, and advisers or educators.

It is encouraging that significantly fewer Indian adults see corruption as widespread -- down seven percentage points for government and eight points for business from 2011 to 2012, according to Gallup data. This change in opinion took place after India's Supreme Court revoked illegally awarded telecom licenses in February. Hopefully, this is not the government's temporary response to the public's outrage and protests but a sustained effort to eradicate corruption and build strong governance to support entrepreneurship development in India.

In the short term, progress in formalizing governance and making it more transparent could demoralize entrepreneurs who want to grow a business informally or go underground to exploit opportunities, which could cause a decline in entrepreneurship. But this progress could lead to reducing unproductive or destructive entrepreneurship, which is necessary for healthy and productive entrepreneurship. In any case, such improvement would require long-term joint efforts by policymakers, thought leaders, practitioners, and experts from the entrepreneurial community.

Survey Methods

Results (India) are based on face-to-face interviews with 5,000 adults, aged 15 and older, conducted Jan. 29-March 8, 2012, in India. For results based on the total sample of national adults, one can say with 95% confidence that the maximum margin of sampling error is ±1.7 percentage points. Surveys in prior years were conducted with between 2,000 and 6,000 Indian adults, and the margin of error for previous surveys ranges from ±1.7 to ±2.6 percentage points.

Results (20 countries in Asia) are based on face-to-face and telephone interviews with approximately 1,000 adults, aged 15 and older, conducted between April 5 and Dec. 4, 2011, in Thailand, Laos, Singapore, Nepal, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Hong Kong, Afghanistan, Mongolia, Philippines, Cambodia, Taiwan, Bangladesh, Japan, Indonesia, Pakistan, Vietnam, India, South Korea, and China. For results based on the total sample of national adults, one can say with 95% confidence that the maximum margin of sampling error ranges from ±2 to ±4 percentage points.

The margin of error reflects the influence of data weighting. In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of public opinion polls.

Source: 31 July, 2012/Business Journal

RESOURCE

Higher your education, harder it is getting a job

India's official unemployment rate last year was 3.8%, data released recently by the Labour Bureau shows, but, as always, averages hide many stories. A closer look at the numbers shows that unemployment rises with education level to 10% among graduates, and higher still for backward castes.

The Chandigarh-based Labour Bureau under the union ministry of labour and employment released the 'Employment and Unemployment Survey 2012' last week. The pan-India survey had a representative sample of 1.2 lakh households. According to the survey, India's official unemployment rate is 3.8%, with urban unemployment at 5.1% and rural at 3.5%. Unemployment is higher among women than among men; 6.7% for women as against 2.8% for men.

Calculations by TIG using the labour bureau numbers show that unemployment rises steadily with education level. While unemployment among

the illiterate is 1.2%, unemployment among graduates is 9.4% and among post-graduates it is 10%. In the United States and United Kingdom, where recession has led to poor job growth, the unemployment rate for graduates is at a record high, but this is still under 5%, in comparison.

REVERSE SWING

Educational unemployment rate

Level	Urban	Rural	All
Illiterate	1.3	1.1	1.2
Primary	2.1	1.6	1.7
Secondary	4.4	5.8	5.4
HSc	7.3	7.8	7.3
Graduate	**8.2**	11.0	9.4
PG	7.7	**13.9**	**10.0**
All	5.1	3.5	3.8

Source: Labour Bureau; all figures in %

For urban India, graduate unemployment is 8.2% while unemployment among post-graduates is slightly lower, at 7.7%.

These findings are consistent with those of the National Sample Survey 2009-10 which show that the higher the level of education, the higher the open unemployment, says Santosh Mehrotra, economist and director-general of the Institute of Applied Manpower Research, an autonomous institution under the Planning Commission. "The illiterate are the poorest, and the poorest simply cannot afford to be unemployed, so they do some work, even if they are under-employed," says Mehrotra. "As a result, in poor economies like ours, you see very little open unemployment," he says.

The correlation between low education and low unemployment also explains another finding of the Labour Bureau, that socially disadvantaged groups like scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other backward classes have lower unemployment than "others". At the aggregate level, unemployment among SCs is 3.2%, for STs it is 2.7% and for OBCs it is 3.2% as compared to 5.4% for "others".

However this appears to be a result of lower education levels among backward groups, because at the higher end of the education spectrum, there is higher unemployment among backward castes than for "others". Among SCs, graduate unemployment is 11.3% and post-graduate unemployment 12.7%, while for "others", the corresponding figures are 9% and 9.7%. Unemployment among graduate and post-graduate STs and OBCs is also higher than for "others". Across social groups, graduate unemployment among women is above 25%.

Ram Mohan Kumar completed his BCom from a private college in Noida in 2008. The son of a carpenter, he is the first person in his family with a degree. "It was not possible for me to study after that because post-graduate courses are too expensive. I looked for a job doing accounts or insurance work after graduating but I could not get anything. Now I do odd jobs for a living. I feel my degree is just wasted," he says. Indu Rai, who like Kumar is dalit, completed her M.A in Sociology from Damoh in Madhya Pradesh. "I thought I could get a teaching job but everyone asks for a BEd. I have five siblings to educate. How can I do another degree now?" she asks over the phone.

Mehrotra says that the higher levels of unemployment among graduate SCs points to discrimination in the labour market, an issue that economist and Indian Council of Social Science Research chairman Sukhadeo Thorat has written about. In a landmark study, Thorat and his fellow researcher Paul Attewell answered job ads with fictional resumes. They found that applicants with a dalit surname were systematically less likely to be called for an interview than upper caste applicants with poorer qualifications than the dalit applicants.

Source: 18 July, 2012/Times of India

India's children neither healthy nor happy: report

India fares poorly among middle-income countries when it comes to overall well-being of children even as the world witnessed significant progress in child health, education and nutrition during the last decade.

India has slipped by 12 ranks since 1995 and is placed 112th in the global "Child Development Index" released by Save the Children, the world's leading independent NGO that works for child rights.

According to the report, which analysed child well-being on three basic parameters of health, education and nutrition since 1995, India's CDI fell by three ranks from 100 to 103 between 1995 and 1999, and by another nine ranks (103 to 112) between 2005 and 2010. Out of 141 countries covered by the report, India is among the 14 whose ranks have dropped, it said.

"It is a wake-up call for India. Save the Children has reiterated economic progress must result in inclusive growth for all, especially the poor and the marginalised," said Thomas Chandy, CEO, Save the Children, India.

The CDI, launched in 2008 as a tool to monitor the progress in child well-being, ranks the best and worst places for children and improvements in child well-being globally.

It measures the number of children in school, under five mortality rates and number of underweight children. The three indicators are aggregated by simply calculating the average score between them for each period under review, meaning that each of them has equal weighting in the index scores.

According to the report, Japan is at present the best place in the world for a child, followed by Spain, Germany, Italy, France, Canada, Switzerland, UK and Norway.

The US is ranked 24 in the Index, while Australia is at 16th place and China is at 29th. Somalia is at the bottom.

The report also found that conditions for children have improved in 90 per cent of countries since the second half of the 1990s. Compared to that time, a child is now a third more likely to go to school and a third less likely to die before their fifth birthday.

However in stark contrast, it shows that nutrition is seriously lagging behind and that the proportion of acutely malnourished children grew by 1.2 per cent during the 2000s.

In India, 42 per cent of children are underweight, while 58 per cent are stunted by the age of two years.

Source: 20 July, 2012/ Ibn Live

No Indian educational institution among top 30 in Asia

No Indian educational institution was able to make it among the top 30 in the recently released Asian institution rankings.

"QS Asian University 2012 rankings have just been released and no Indian educational institution has been able to make it among the top 30 Asian institutions," chairman- Board of Governors of Indian Institute of Technology, Gandhinagar, G N Mashelkar said, while speaking at the first Convocation of the institute here.

The ranking was released around two weeks ago, he said adding only four Indian institutions have made it to top 50.

Expressing concern over the trend, Mashelkar said none of our (Indian) educational institutions have occupied space ever in top one hundred in the global rankings released by Sanghai University.

"The global rankings is given by Sanghai University, and we have never been there in the top one hundred," he said.

He pointed out that for an institute to rise to top, it should essentially have three virtues - innovation, passion and compassion.

Chief guest on the occasion, Infosys chairman Emeritus Narayana Murthy told the students that they were passing out at a time when India was the cynosure of all eyes.

"The world expects India to be one of the leaders to solve global problems of politics and economics. India sits at the high table in major multilateral deliberations," Murthy said.

"We are also the most thin skinned people. We have to learn to take criticism objectively. Therefore, when somebody criticises you or India, do not loose temper. Sit down with him or her, ask for data and facts, and argue rationally," he advised the students.

"Remember that discipline, speed of decision making and velocity of action are necessary attributes for high performance. Every day, in whatever you do, just ask how you can make it cheaper, faster and better. I believe that innovation must become part of the DNA of every organisation from the janitor to the chairman," he said.

Eighty-six students were awarded degrees in Bachelor of Technology (B.Tech) at the convocation.

Source: 23 July, 2012/ Times of India

Only 57% engineers can write grammatically correct English sentences: Aspiring Minds' report

Only 57% engineers can write grammatically correct sentences in English, while more than half of all engineers (52%) would not be fluent in a majority of words that are used with regular frequency at the workplace. These were part of the findings of The English Gap Measured: English Learning Levels Engineers Graduates Report 2011-12, by employability measurement and recruitment firm Aspiring Minds.

The report, analysing the English skills of over 55000 engineers in India, further revealed that more than 25% engineers do not even possess the English comprehension skills required to understand engineering school curriculum. Less than 48% engineers understand moderately sophisticated words of English and around 50% engineers possess grammar skills no better than a class VII student, the report added.

The report extensively discusses specific areas of English skills that engineering graduates most lack in and implications of these deficiencies. It also provides suggestive ways to bridge these gaps by way of interventions in the Indian higher education system in order to improve the English of students.

Based on the findings, the report made several recommendations on the premise that level of language fluency cannot be developed in four years

alone. The onus lies on schools to clear the basics and inculcate in students a love for reading and writing in the English language. Consistent efforts over the four years of engineering education would bolster the command over all aspects of the language making students more employable, it said.

Varun Aggarwal, Director, Aspiring Minds said: "Recruiters and HR managers around the world report that candidates with English skills above the local average stand out from the crowd and garner 30-50% higher salaries than similarly-qualified candidates without English skills. The trends in India are no different, with English fluency being one of the key qualities recruiters look for during the interview process."

Source: 24 July, 2012/Times of India

Can education make you happy?

"Education is not preparation for life; education is life *itself," said American philosopher, psychologist and educational.*

This saying is certainly true simply because one cannot ignore the importance of education. And according to the findings of a recent study in UK, the higher people's level of general education, not only the more satisfied they were in their daily life but also the more worthwhile they felt. The survey was conducted on over a group of 15,000 people, out of which a whopping 81 per cent of the people with very high levels of education levels said they were very satisfied in life. Also, as the levels of education decreased, so did the percentage of people and their levels of happiness. We spoke to experts to find out how much does education contribute to happiness in life.

Atul Thakur, faculty member at a prestigious Mumbai college partially agrees with the study saying, "Yes, because higher education opens the door of knowledge and also can give purpose of life. It may give the maturity to distinguish between right and wrong. And no, because very few take education as a thirst or the quest for knowledge. Rest of them focus on their career and material gains. So the answer depends on how you define satisfaction."

Career counsellor Amrita Ganguly says, "Looking at my clients, it's not the level of academic qualifications which gives people satisfaction but what they do with it. The sector of people who judge themselves based on how educated they are suffer from major inferiority complex." As for happiness, she says, "It would depend on every individual and if they are happy and content with the other sectors of their life and value themselves for whatever they have, I don't think level of education would matter much."

Well most of us think that, the more higher levels of education, it sets the ball rolling for better high paying jobs, recognition and sometimes even professionally successful partners. So what are the factors that are responsible for happiness quotient amongst the highly educated besides their education? Psychologist and child counsellor Chandni Mehta opines that intelligence and qualification does not necessarily mean higher pay for example, a journalist or a lawyer. "Besides education, there are balancing factors like financial security, family and relationships, emotional security, etc. Also, people belonging to creative fields like musicians, actors, etc. do not necessarily possess or need to possess very high levels of education." She says that a good job, nurturing relationships, and a great network of friends are some of the factors that contribute to happiness in life.

Why is it important

And what role does education levels play in happiness quotient, especially from an Indian perspective? Ganguly answers this question by saying that education does play a very important part in every individual's life as it helps build a person's self-worth which in turn builds confidence and affect all aspects of the individual's life including happiness and the way he/she looks at things which is very important for growth, hence India as a growing country needs it to grow and sustain the growth.

Source: 26 July, 2012/ Times of India

Percentage of educated girls on top posts remains dismal in India

The number of girls seeking higher education in India is increasing day by day but it is very disappointing to note that only a few of them are reaching top posts, as per a report by Mackenzie & company.

This is a sorry picture that has come out in the latest reports of an MNC called, Mackenzie &company. Not only this, girls even holding lower posts has not been much encouraging which pegs at a dismal 35 percent.

On the other, reports from China is a little bit encouraging where more than 76 percent women are in jobs which rates among the highest in the world.

In this regard, Professor of Social Studies faculty at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) Ehsanul Hak said, "The number of educated women has escalated in India but they have been found to be

less ambitious in comparison with their male counterparts. What is most distressing is that even after getting through the tests, they are always in a position to be questioned about their merit and the way they got through the test. On the other, Ranjana Kumari of Centre for Social Research said," It has been observed on several occasions that women even don't think about their promotions due to family reasons.

They fear that they might be transferred after their promotions. This is the reason putting women on par with male counterparts is among the 10 top agendas of various companies.

Increasing participation of women

China: 9%; Australia: 12%; Singapore: 15%; Indonesia: 5%

Women at top

IIM Bengaluru: 26%; IIM Kozhikode : 36%; IIM Ranchi: 39%

Source: 26 July, 2012/ Jagaran

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

Apeejay Stya Education Research Foundation (ASERF) is guided by the vision of eminent educationist, industrialist and philanthropist Dr. Stya Paul's vision of value based holistic education for a responsive and responsible citizenship with a finely ingrained attitude of service before self. It is supported by Apeejay Stya Group, a leading Industrial & Investment House of India with interests in diverse fields. It will attempt to shoulder the efforts in serving the broader issues of Access, Quality, Equity & Relevance of Education and gear up to face the challenges of the new world order using collaborative and multidisciplinary approach. The foundation will become the repository of information on education and conduct research in new educational methodologies while collaborating with premier educational institutions globally.

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