Apeejay Stya Education Research Foundation

Rooted in Values Soaring Towards Excellence

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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 2009. Click here to download the prescribed format along with the terms and conditions.

Apeejay Education Society launches courses in Biosciences & Clinical Research: Apeejay Education Society (AES), has now established an institute for Biosciences and Clinical Research to meet the growing demand for technical personnel in the Biosciences sector. The institute, *Apeejay Svran Institute for Biosciences and Clinical Research, Gurgaon, (AIBCR)* has been established in collaboration with leading companies in the industry, viz Martin & Harris, ASG Biochemicals and Walter & Bushnell Health Care.

For more, visit: www.apeejay.edu/aibcr

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.

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NEWS

The wrongs in the Right to Education Bill

While HRD minister Kapil Sibal's 100-day plan has drawn mixed reactions — we need to congratulate him on taking such bold steps as scrapping of class X board exams and suggesting the setting-up of an accreditation board to rate schools. The minister's promise to also enact the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Bill, which seeks to make education a fundamental right of every child in the age group of six to 14 years, however, needs deep consideration. In its present avatar the Bill suffers from major anomalies which must be given due consideration, before its enactment. Some major flaws are:

Children in the age group 0-6 years not covered

The Supreme Court's historic Unnikrishnan judgment in 1993, gave all children up to 14 years of age a Fundamental Right to Education. The court contended that the Fundamental Right to Life (Article 21) of the Constitution should be read in 'harmonious construction' with the Directive in Article 45 to provide free and compulsory education to children of 0-14 years, including those below six years of age. However, the 86 th Constitutional Amendment Act, Article 21A, limited the fundamental right to education to 6-14 years and this Act will further this huge mistake by not recognising the importance of the early years. This is in contradiction to India's own commitment at the Jomtien Conference (1990), acknowledging expansion of early childhood care and development activities as an integral part of the 'Education for All' objectives. Globally, recognition exists that the early years are the most critical years for lifelong development. This recognition comes from various quarters, including evidence from brain research that '...neurological and biological pathways that affect health, learning and behaviour throughout life, are set in the early years...' (Mustard, 2007). Research has noted that neglect during the early years can often result in irreversible reduction in the full development of the brain's potential. On the other hand, research the world over has underlined the short and long term benefits of good quality early childhood care and development programming especially in contexts of deprivation, leading to improvement in children's health, cognitive ability and performance at school.

How can a Bill be enacted six decades after Independence and make this major error? India cannot afford to deprive its youngest 16-crore population of a right to nutrition, health and early childhood education as enshrined in the Convention of the Rights of Children, to which India is a signatory.

By not including 0-6 years in the Bill, the country is also furthering gender discrimination, since it is always the girl who is left to take care of the younger siblings, thus, depriving her of her right to education.

Bill does not promote a common school system & legitimises inequality through a multi-layered system

The Bill mentions in Chapter III 6(1) that it will be the responsibility of the state to provide free and compulsory education in a neighbourhood school within a period of three years from the commencement of the Bill. With the MDG goals set for 2015, India cannot afford to wait this long and it should be enforced in a maximum of two years by the states.

While 6(4) and(5) espouse that children should be given an equitable education as enshrined in the Constitution and economic, social, cultural, linguistic, locational, disability related barriers should not prevent a child from participating in and completing their education — there are no provisions to create an equitable infrastructure required for this task. Unless a common school system that encompasses all government, private and aided/unaided schools is envisaged with effective monitoring mechanisms to ensure quality of education, the Bill will not be able to meet its obligations. Also, the inequitable system of education within the government, eg Kendriya Vidyalayas, XI th Plan's 6,000 model schools or the state governments' Pratibha Vidyalayas (Delhi), Utkrishta Vidyalayas (Madhya Pradesh) or residential schools (Andhra Pradesh) — being allocated special funds needs to be investigated and equal funds made available to all existing schools to develop a common minimum standard. A schedule of norms for quality is missing from this Bill and must be given due importance.

Also, the Bill must strive to work against creating a parallel and discriminatory system of alternative, non-formal education, into which are enrolled children from most disadvantaged circumstances, eg street and working children, children with disabilities, etc. The Bill must be categorical in making schools flexible and ready for providing education for diverse needs of children — why should a 'one-size-fits-all' system persist for education.

Teachers

The Bill continues to propogate discrimination against government school children as their teachers will still be deployed for census, elections and disaster relief

duties(Chapter IV, 23). This is a complete abrogation of rights of children, particularly in times of disasters, when they are in urgent need of education to provide them a routine and 'normalisation'. Moreover, the shutting down of schools during emergencies and disasters is a strong correlate to trafficking and 'missing' children.

Equitable quality of education

RTE bill includes 'provision of equitable quality of education' as one of its objectives, but fails to define the term 'equitable' unequivocally. The term 'equitable' quality should refer to fulfilling certain minimum infrastructure, administrative (including those relating to teachers, library), financial, curricular, pedagogic, linguistic and socio-cultural norms. The Bill specifies norms for physical infrastructure (number of rooms, teachers, toilets, etc) but does not outline expectations on learning outcomes. Some of the mandates like 'A child cannot be held back in any grade or expelled from a school till class 8 th ," emphasise a no-detention policy, but makes no mention of the learning levels of children. In light of current learning levels as indicated in ASER Report (2009), the Bill must have provisions for a database to capture learning levels of children, with a special emphasis on first generation learners.

Child Labour

Though the Bill prohibits any person from preventing a child from participating in elementary education, it does not adequately address the issue of child labour. The Bill refers to the Child Labour (prohibition and regulation) Act, 1986 (number 61 of 1986), and emphasises that no person shall employ or otherwise engage a child in a manner that renders her a working child. However, the Bill ignores the reality of majority of poor children who are employed in agriculture and who bear the burden of housework and sibling care. The Bill needs to categorically state that all forms of employment and engagement, which hinders the development of the child, should be banned and made a cognisable offence.

Children with disabilities

The Bill says children with 'severe or profound disability, (who) cannot be provided elementary education in a neighbourhood school, shall have the right to be provided education in an appropriate alternative environment as may be prescribed.' This is against the principle of 'inclusion' and does not put the onus on the education system to meet individual needs of children. Whereas, the Bill has detailed the norms required of a school (teacher-pupil ratio, buildings etc), it is silent on the facilities needed to enable children with disabilities to attend school (such as ramps, Braille readers, etc). In this Bill, 'disability' has the meaning assigned by the Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995, which does not include such other disabilities as defined by the National Trust Act, 1999 (autism and cerebral palsy).

While the enactment of a law making Right to Education a Fundamental Right has become necessary since the goal of universal elementary education has remained elusive despite being a Directive Principle for more than five decades, it is important that the Bill finds remedies for all the above glaring lacunae.

Source: New Delhi /timesofindia.indiatimes.com/ 6th July, 2009

A bone of contention between Ministries

In a turf battle of sorts over the right to regulate medical education, the Health Ministry announced its intention of subsuming the Medical Council of India under a new regulatory body barely days after the Human Resource Development Ministry said a Commission set up by it would henceforth be responsible for running all professional councils and regulatory bodies, including the MCI.

At a press conference on Wednesday, Union Health and Family Welfare Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad announced the setting up of a National Council for Human Resources in Health (NCHRH) to act as an overarching regulatory body that would bring within its purview existing medical professional councils and regulatory agencies like the MCI.

The proposed move appears to clash with the HRD Ministry's proposal announced last week of establishing an autonomous umbrella authority for higher education and research.

According to the HRD Ministry, the National Commission for Higher Education and Research, based on the recommendations of the Yashpal Committee report, would encompass within it professional councils and regulatory bodies like the University Grants Commission, the All India Council for Technical Education and the MCI.

Asked about the "overlapping" of the jurisdictions of the two proposed panels, Mr. Azad said the matter would be sorted out between the two Ministries. The setting up of the NCHRH was mentioned in the President's speech in Parliament. As of now, the MCI, the Nursing Council of India, the Dental Council of India and other such bodies are functioning in isolation, Mr. Azad said.

Source: New Delhi /hindu.com/2nd July, 2009

Canada forges new links with India in research, higher education

With two new initiatives in research and higher education, Canada continues to forge new links and strengthen existing ties with India. David Malone, who

was Canada's High Commissioner to India from 2006-2008, and is now the president of Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC), a fonder of global development research, has outlined a new capacity building initiative to increase the ability of research institutions to shape economic and social policy.

The IDRC is seeking applications from research institutions focusing on economic and social policy from five South Asian countries, including India. Under a second initiative, the University of Alberta has announced a partnership with the Indian Institute of Technology - Bombay that will see students and faculty from both institutions working closely on health and energy issues.

The University of Alberta in Edmonton is one of the top 100 teaching and research universities in the world. The agreement will enhance existing relationships between individual engineering and science faculties from both institutions. Students and researchers from the University of Alberta will also be able to travel and work in India and their counterparts will come to Edmonton.

Indira Samarasekera, U of A president, said partnering with IIT-Bombay is consistent with the university's mission to connect with the world.

"We understand the importance of working collaboratively with other leaders in finding solutions that will make a meaningful difference in our global community," Samarasekera said.

"Our partnership with IIT-Bombay also illustrates our commitment to serve Alberta and the country, as it makes it possible for our researchers to travel and work directly with their counterparts in India through summer school programs, joint research initiatives and our new Distinguished U of A-IIT-B Professorship in Nanotechnology/Energy exchange program," she said.

Currently, IIT-Bombay is ranked 36th by Times Higher Education-QS World University Rankings among engineering and IT universities, and produces about 20 per cent of India's PhD graduates.

The U of A is in similar company, ranking 74th overall, 45th in life sciences and biomedicine, and 46th in engineering and information technology.

Source: New Delhi/ANI /thaindian.com/8th July, 2009

Crisis fears on university places

Fifty thousand more people have applied for university places in the UK this year, increasing fears that many will not get on a degree course.

More school pupils say they aspire to go to university, a survey shows Figures just released by the admissions body Ucas show applications are up by 9.7% on this time last year.

The Conservatives accuse the government of "sleepwalking into a crisis", as more young people try to avoid the recession by studying.

Ministers say they are committed to expanding opportunities for the young.

The new figures show that so far 592,312 people have applied to start undergraduate courses this autumn - compared with 540,108 at this time last year (up 9.7%).

Among those living in England, the figure rose by 10.1% (from 390,358 to 429,734).

The Ucas figures are a snapshot of the picture of university applications, but do suggest an upward trend.

The last figures released, in February, showed an 8% increase in applications year on year.

In times of recession, university and college applications generally rise.

The biggest increase was in applications from young people in European Union countries outside the UK .

This figure rose by 15.4% across all age groups, with the largest increase among those aged 20 and under (17.9%).

Earlier this year the Westminster government placed a cap of 10,000 on the number of extra student places it would fund this year, reduced from 15,000 because of a funding squeeze.

UK application by age

Under 20: +6.7%

21 to 24: +17.2%

25 and over: +22%

"But today we have the hard evidence to show that tens of thousands of people who hoped to go on to higher education this year face a brick wall.

"Young people are becoming the biggest victims of this recession. The number of young people not in education, employment or training is already at record levels and now we are on course to have a record number of young people refused a university place."

'Graduates needed'

There are reports that the government is working on a rescue plan, but officials are not commenting on that.

The government has a target to get 50% of young people experiencing higher education.

Higher Education Minister David Lammy said: "This government is committed to expanding opportunities for young people and supporting them through the recession. "The UK will need more graduates to win the highly skilled jobs of the future so it is encouraging

to see that so many young people want to go to university.

"There are record numbers of students currently in higher education - 300,000 more than in 1997. And this year we expect that there will be 40,000 more accepted applicants than just three years ago.

Wes Streeting, National Union of Students

"Students who get the grades to meet their offer will secure a place at university this summer, but we will continue to work with the sector to support those who do not and to manage increased demand."

The National Union of Students (NUS) welcomed the rise in applications but said an urgent expansion of places was needed.

NUS president: "Unless there is an urgent expansion of places, universities will be unable to meet this demand. We are therefore calling on the government to take immediate action to increase student numbers for the coming year.

"Applicants of all ages are clearly making the correct assessment that it is better to invest now in their education and training"?

The rise in applications comes as employers that recruit graduates are taking fewer this year.

Meanwhile almost eight out of 10 secondary school pupils aim to go to university, a survey suggests.

Research for the Sutton Trust found 77% of those aged 11 to 16 thought it likely they would go on to higher education, up from 72% in 2008.

Source: /news.bbc.co.uk/9th July, 2009

Education brass tacks

The government has ambitious plans to transform education in India but is still working on implementing them

Following human resource development minister Kapil Sibal's unraveling of his 100-day plan for his ministry; the education sector is likely to see radical changes. Sibal has announced making Board exams optional and implementing the recommendations of the Yashpal Committee report for higher education.

The government has recently set up six new branches of the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) and has announced setting up of several NIITs or National Institute of Information Technology and IIITs or Indian Institute of Information Technology. It is also setting up polytechnics in 100 districts, to cater to minority groups, scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, and other backward castes.

It is widely felt that the government's flagship programme, Sarva Shiksha Abhayan needs improvement in terms of accountability and fund allocation. At present the government allocates equal amount of funds across all districts. This could undergo drastic change in the forthcoming budget. The funds will now be charged as per the requirement of each district. Also there would be emphasis on the outcome budget.

The budget is likely to deal with prime minister's announcement on creating 2,500 model schools on the lines of Kendriya Vidyalayas using Public Private Partnership (PPP). Various PPP models are being adopted to cater to every level of education.

In addition to these schemes, Higher and Technical education is allocated Rs80,000 crores in the 11th plan, of which only Rs11,000 crores have been utilized in the last two years.

Source: New Delhi /livemint.com/2nd July, 2009

Global meet of International Association of Universities

In what could be termed as a major leap in the field of higher education and international recognition of Indian education institutions, the country will have the rare honour of hosting the fourth global meet of International Association of Universities in 2011.

This is in backdrop of the fact that India would be the first country outside Europe and North America to be bestowed upon this honour, confirmed director, Indian Institute of Information Technology, Allahabad (IIIT-A) MD Tiwari, who is also the president of the Association of Indian Universities (AIU) upon his return from Mexico, after attending the third global meet.

Sharing his experience with TOI, Tiwari said that the participating countries favoured the candidature of India for the fourth global meet of the International Association of Universities (IAU) at the third IAU Global Meeting of Association (GMA) held at Mexico. It is pertinent to mention that Tiwari, as president of AIU, represented India at the Mexico meet. He said that a formal proposal moved by him, was seconded by IAU members during the meetings, which has brought the next meet on Indian soil.

It is worth while to mention that IAU, founded in 1950, is the UNESCO-based worldwide association of higher education institutions. It brings together institutions and organisations from some 150 countries for reflection and action on common concerns and collaborates with various international, regional and national bodies active in higher education.

The IAU global meeting is the biggest congregation of education officials, universities, experts, consultancies and forums. The country's educational asset and potential have duly been recognised by several IAU member countries. "The world body for universities

reposing faith in the country for hosting the mega Fourth GMA is a glowing example of India's growing clout in the academic world," said Dr Tiwari. He said that IAU was striving hard for strengthening the regional integration movements and creation of regional higher education areas leading to more collaborative and competitive global higher education scene.

The proposed mega event in India, will pave way for promoting closer academic relation, quality collaborations and joint academic initiatives with leading universities. It will also bring together leading education consultancy firms, union and associations on a single platform.

As regards the venue, the choice is between Allahabad and New Delhi in view of the fact that the IIIT-A Allahabad has already successfully hosted the annual meeting of vice-chancellors and directors and conference of Nobel laureates in recent years.

Source: Allahabad /times of india/1st July, 2009

Govt. clears free education for 6-14 age group

Right to Education Bill, a big-ticket move to make education a fundamental right for every child in the 6-14 age group, was cleared by the Union Cabinet on Thursday. It's slated to be introduced in Parliament in the current session of Parliament. When passed by it, one of the longest awaited political promises would have been honoured.

The first UPA government spent five years discussing and debating it through various committees and groups of minister, and by the time it was finalized, the Bill could not be introduced in Rajya Sabha. Therefore, the Bill, incorporating three major suggestions by the Standing Committee of Parliament, had to be brought to the cabinet again.

When RTE becomes law, it would empower the seven-year-old 86th Constitutional amendment that made free and compulsory education a fundamental right. The RTE Bill sets down guidelines for states and the Centre to execute and enforce this right. Earlier, education was part of the directive principles of state policy.

Both the Centre and states will be responsible for the finances. The Centre will prepare the capital and recurring expenditure and provide it as grants-in-aid to each state from time to time. However, the share between the Centre and states will be decided later.

The cost to the exchequer will be nearly Rs 12,000 crore every year, even private unaided schools will get assistance as 25% of their seats will have to be reserved for poor children in the neighbourhood. However, the Bill is clear those schools that got land at a concessional rate and were anyway obliged to

give reservation to 25% poor children in the neighbourhood will not be compensated. Compensation will be based on per child expenditure by government on education. Currently the per child cost borne by government is around Rs 3,000 per annum.

The principals of many schools raised the compensation issue with HRD minister Kapil Sibal on Thursday. But minister said schools should not mind losing their profit a little bit.

The legislation has a host of features that stress not only on reaching out to every child in the 6-14 age groups but also on quality and accountability of the state and education system. To ensure that the law gets effectively implemented, the Bill has provisions prohibiting teachers from undertaking private tuition as well as not letting them being used for non-educational purposes.

To ensure that parents have equal stake in the system, the bill provides for school management committees in all government and aided schools. Women have been given 50% reservation in the school committees. Each committee will monitor and oversee the working of the school, manage its assets and ensure quality.

There is also a provision that teacher vacancy should never exceed more than 10% of the total strength.

To monitor implementation of the law, the Bill proposes a National Advisory Council at the centre and state advisory council in each state capital. In case of complaints of non-compliance, the initial complaint would go to local authority and should be resolved within 90 days.

Source: New Delhi /times of india/3rd July, 2009

UGC on Deemed Universities and UGC Chairman's interview (Frontline)
UGC warns deemed-to-be universities

Taking a serious note on the increasing trend of violating the guidelines framed by the University Grants Commission (UGC), the UGC has written Vice-Chancellors and Directors of all deemed-to-be universities, as the UGC has observed some of them violating the guidelines and instructions framed by the UGC.

Such violations have resulted in confusion among students and parents.

All these varsities have been told to provide a legal undertaking within a month of receiving the letter that the norms were not being violated.

In its letter to all these deemed to be universities, the UGC has mentioned that deemed universities are not allowed to open and run off-campus centres/offshore campus centres/establish new departments/start new

courses without obtaining specific prior approval of the UGC/ Government of India.

The letter further says, students could be admitted only after the approvals were obtained and submission of proposals could not be guaranteed approvals.

Deemed Universities can not give misleading advertisements in newspapers about constituent units which are not approved, the letter said, adding that the advertisements had to mention the constituent units approved by the government under the ambit of the deemed university.

Without getting a prior approval of UGC-AICTE-DEC Joint Committee, the deemed varsities cannot conduct any courses under the distance mode. Degrees awarded without such approval would not be valid.

Study centres established for counselling or advising could not admit students, the letter said.

The deemed universities, being unitary institutions, are not allowed to affiliate any colleges or institutions, and degrees awarded through such colleges or institutions would be treated as fake, says the letter.

Human resource development minister Kapil Sibal has already announced that his ministry will introduce a law against "educational malpractices" — including misleading claims & capitation fees. The Telegraph had first reported plans for this law on June 15.

But the law, which is being drafted, will take time before it can be cleared bureaucratically and then by Parliament.

A legal undertaking will allow the UGC to seek action in a court of law against an institution that violated its commitment — amounting to perjury.

During the five years under Arjun Singh, private deemed universities mushroomed on an unprecedented scale. Frequent allegations of corruption in the grant of the status swirled in the HRD ministry corridors especially over the past two years.

On April 28, The Telegraph first reported the government's decision to allow deemed universities to drop the prefix that distinguishes them from full-fledged universities, effectively allowing them to confuse students.

Source: Based on the news / indiaedunews.net /7th July, 2009 and / telegraphindia.com / 9th July, 2009

UGC to report on deemed universities by Aug. 28

The University Grants Commission is expected to hand over its review report on deemed universities to the government by August 28. In the mean time the ministry of human resource development has also set up its own committee of academic experts to review the functioning of deemed to be universities? The

UGC, which was asked by the ministry to undertake this probe on June 4, was given three months to complete its review.

A five stage procedure has been set out for this review. This includes written questionnaires for the deemed to be universities as well as field visits to shortlisted institutions.

There are at present 128 deemed universities, of these 35 are government managed. There has been a rapid expansion in the number of deemed universities since 2005. Between 1956 and 1990, only 29 institutions were granted the deemed university status, while between 2000 and 2005, 26 private-sponsored institutions got the deemed university status. Since 2005, the number of private deemed universities has increased to 128.

The review will report on the deficiencies, with respect to maintenance of standards, of deemed universities. Particular emphasis is being placed on the availability of the qualified faculty, infrastructure and the sanctity of the admission process. The UGC will also report on the status of accreditation of existing deemed universities to the National Assessment and Accreditation Council and the National Board of Accreditation. As of now only 35 of the 93 private deemed to be universities have been accredited by the NAAC.

Source: New Delhi /economic times/10th July, 2009

The increase explained

AMID the controversy over the proliferation of deemed and private universities and allegations of malpractice by some of these institutions, the University Grants Commission (UGC) has been drawn into the debate over the quality of education in the country and its commercialisation. Professor S.K. Thorat, who took over as UGC Chairperson in 2006, spoke to **Frontline** on the issues confronting higher education and the role of the UGC in tackling them. Excerpts from the interview.

What is the rationale for giving deemed university status? Was it not envisaged as an exceptional situation, not one to be given liberally? Were the standards for granting deemed university status to institutions diluted?

The idea of deemed to be universities was conceptualised by the University Education Commission [1948] headed by Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan. Private or public institutions that had a unique and distinct character of their own could be recognised as deemed universities. To accommodate such institutions, a special provision was made in the UGC Act, 1956. The Act does not visualise deemed-

to-be universities as an exceptional situation. The rationale for giving deemed-to-be university status was the uniqueness and distinct character of such institutions.

The Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, and the Indian Agricultural Research Institute were among the institutions that got deemed university status in 1958. The guidelines approved by the Government of India are the singular basis for consideration of proposals for grant of the status.

The standards for granting deemed university status have not been diluted. On the contrary, over time they have been made more stringent. In addition to the conditions stipulated in the UGC guidelines framed in 2000, now any institution applying for deemed university status has to get a minimum B grade accreditation certificate from the National Accreditation and Assessment Council [NAAC] or at least 75 per cent of its eligible courses have to be accredited by the National Board of Accreditation [NBA].

Was the criterion of merit, quality, etc., used when according such status or do you think extraneous considerations played a role?

The UGC Act and the guidelines for conferring deemed university statuses are indeed stringent. A three-tier system exists for scrutinising and examining the proposal before advice is given to the Ministry of Human Resource Development [MHRD]. First, the proposal has to meet the requirements as laid down in the guidelines. Second, after the minimum conditions are met, an experts committee is constituted for an on-spot assessment of academic and physical infrastructure. Third, the UGC deliberates over the report of the experts committee, and it is only thereafter that the advice of the UGC is forwarded to the Government of India.

The Ministry also often verifies and writes to the UGC before granting deemed university status. The procedure involved is participatory, transparent and open. Thus, the guidelines, and not any extraneous considerations, are the basis for the decision of the UGC and the MHRD.

The UGC conducts a periodical review of the deemed universities as per the provision made in the gazette notification issued by the Government of India. It needs emphasis that an institution declared as a deemed university under the **de novo** category is reviewed every year by an experts committee of the UGC for a period of five years from the date of such declaration.

What explains the alarming rise in the number of deemed universities in the recent years?

I am not quite sure that there has been an alarming rise in the number of deemed universities. It is necessary to state the facts to place the issue in proper context. By 2009, there were 127 deemed universities, up from only one in 1956. The rise in the number of deemed universities are closely linked to the rapid increase in the number of colleges, particularly private self-financing institutions, since the early 1990s. These colleges and institutions were potential aspirants for deemed university status. The increase in [applications by] such institutions for deemed university status led to an increase in the overall number of applications for deemed universities.

Let me present some statistics. As of today, there are a total of 479 universities, of which 74 per cent are government-run universities. This means about 25 per cent of our universities are private-run. There are about 39 State private universities. By May 2009, there were 127 deemed universities. These included 86 private deemed universities and 41 governments deemed universities. The government and private deemed universities thus account for 8 per cent and about 17 respectively of the total number of universities.

The question is whether the private deemed universities have grown at an alarming rate. A comparison with other universities throws some light on this issue. Between 1951 and 2008, the number of government universities increased from 20 to 354, that is, 17 times – at an annual rate of 6.6 per cent. The State private universities increased from about one in 1995 to 39 in 2009, that is, 39 times within a period of 15 years – at an annual rate of 6.5 per cent, with 11 of them being created in one single year, 2008. As against this, the private deemed universities increased at an annual rate of about 3 per cent. Thus the increase in the number of private deemed universities has been much less compared with public universities (Central and State) and private State universities.

It is true that private deemed universities have increased in number at a faster rate from 2000 onwards. The number of private deemed universities went up from one in 1964 to 86 in 2009. During 1964-1990, only 10 deemed universities were created, and another 10 during 1991-2000; 67 were added between 2000 and 2009.

Why was the increase in the number of deemed universities (and also private State universities) higher during the decade of 2000-2009? The reason lies in the rapid jump in the number of private self-financing institutions, which are the potential candidates for deemed university status. For instance, the number of colleges increased at an annual rate of 6.65 per cent during 1950-2008. The maximum increase was in the

professional courses. Data from AICTE show that around 4,770 engineering and related professional institutes were set up [during the period]. There were only 43 in 1947. A rapid increase was witnessed after 1995. As a condition for deemed university status was 10 years, the bulk of them became eligible for such status by mid-2000. This resulted in a big rush of applications for deemed university status after 2005. Thus, the number of applications increased from 26 in 2005 to 64 in 2007 and to 99 by June 2009.

Thus, the increase in the number of private deemed universities, particularly in the decade of 2000-2009, is a direct outcome of a jump in the number of private institutions, which in turn was the result of the expansion of higher education, particularly through private participation. Given the reduced role of the government, the role of the private sector has become more prominent. It is necessary to understand this reality before coming to any conclusion.

What are the reforms necessary in the guidelines of deemed universities and what measures are necessary to ensure quality and equity?

There are a number of issues that need urgent attention. First, we need to revisit and redefine the role of the private sector in higher education in terms of goals and participation. Second, if we decide to have a concept of deemed university, the issue of quality and access must be addressed. There is an urgent need to convert the guidelines into regulation, so that they become binding. The UGC has already prepared regulations and sent them to the MHRD for its approval.

As regards quality, the UGC's regular review report and NAAC accreditation are the only two sources for assessing quality. The UGC regularly monitors deviations from its guidelines. The NAAC has assessed 39 out of 125 deemed universities. The sample shows that the grade varies from B plus to A plus. However, there is a need for compulsory accreditation, which the UGC has now done.

The issue of access is more serious, as this is what has affected the image of these institutions in the public eye. The restricted access owing to higher fees is a serious problem. While we have regulated the admission and fee structure for self-financing institutions through common all-India tests and State-level fee committees, and brought some order and transparency, the same has not happened in the case of deemed universities. There is an absolute need to bring deemed universities under the ambit of a common all India admission test and to regulate the fees through an appropriate mechanism. To a large extent, this will address the issues we are witnessing today. The UGC has prepared the guidelines for

admission and fees and proposed to approve them soon. We should revisit the concept of **de novo** category, for which a number of conditions have been relaxed.

Source: New Delhi /frontline.in/1st July, 2009

NDA slams Sibal for 'directionless' reform bid

Slamming the "hasty attempts" at reforming the school examination system and higher education in the country, the NDA on Wednesday said states had not been consulted on the proposed reforms and that there was a great deal of opposition to moves like one common board for the entire country.

"Suggestions made by Union HRD Minister Kapil Sibal are controversial and require discussion. The NDA is not against reforms in education, but is opposed to reforms which are without any roadmap, or any direction. If the government brings a practical proposal to remove the shortcomings in education, the NDA will have a creative approach to them," said former Union HRD minister and BJP leader Murli Manohar Joshi after a meeting.

Education ministers of Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and Chhattisgarh were present while representatives of Bihar, Karnataka and Gujarat sent in written communications. NDA convenor Sharad Yadav and senior BJP leader Sushma Swaraj were also present.

Chhattisgarh Education Minister Hem Chandra Yadav said after the meeting that three broad themes that came up for discussion that were the proposal of a "Higher Education Commission to replace the UGC"; "doing away with Board examinations"; and "having one common Board for the country". "We have not received any official document from the Central Government on the suggestions made by the HRD Minister. We will have next meeting and response after we receive the Union minister's proposals," Yadav said.

Joshi added that real changes should begin at the primary education level and should be spread over two decades, but added that the opinion of educationists, vice-chancellors and student unions should also be sought.

The former Union minister also sought to widen the gamut of the debate and said the government should also examine the changes needed in the role and training of teachers and the creation of more opportunities for students.

Source: New Delhi /indianexpress.com/1st July, 2009

New UGC rules have state in a fix

The state higher education department is in a fix over the recent circular issued by the University Grants

Commission (UGC) vis-a-vis recruitment in colleges and universities.

As per the new regulations of the UGC, candidates with an M.Phil will not be allowed any exemption from appearing in the National Eligibility Test (NET) or State Eligibility Test (SET) for a job in the colleges across the states. Similarly, candidates with a PhD degree will not be exempted from appearing for NET and SET examinations for jobs in universities, if the PhD is not according to the new regulations of the UGC.

The West Bengal College Service Commission, which recruits teachers for various colleges in the state, is already continuing with the interview for about 2,750 posts of teachers in the state while giving exemption to the M.Phil and PhD students. For a considerable number of posts the recruitment process has been completed.

The government will now have to seek a confirmation from the UGC about the employment of the candidates who have been confirmed as per earlier rules. The universities will also have to halt any further recruitment till the issue is resolved. The embargo came at a stage when the colleges are already battling one-fourth vacant seats.

The vice-chancellors of various universities met on Wednesday at the West Bengal Council of Higher Education to decide how to deal with the crisis situation. "Another meeting will be held in a few weeks," said Subimal Sen, Vice-Chairman of the Higher Education Council.

Higher Education Minister Sudarshan Roychowdhury has raised the issue in the state Assembly on Monday. Although the Ministry of Human Resources has made it clear that, it wants to do away with regulatory bodies like UGC, the universities and colleges will have to follow the UGC regulations till it is dissolved.

Source: New Delhi /indianexpress.com/2nd July, 2009

UGC's NET-must rule to hit lakhs of teachers

Lakhs of college teachers and aspiring lecturers with PhD and M.Phil qualifications across the country are facing a bleak future with the University Grants Commission (UGC) suddenly seeking to amend its regulations making a pass in the National Eligibility Test (NET) or State Level Eligibility Test (SLET) mandatory for appointment as college teachers.

This amendment, when notified, would virtually make lakhs of teachers with PhD and M.Phil qualifications sans the NET or SLET, ineligible for appointment in universities and colleges. The migration of such teachers from private colleges to government colleges and universities will also be affected.

Ever since the NET was introduced as an essential qualification for recruiting college teachers in 1991, the UGC had during varying periods exempted candidates who had acquired M.Phil or PhD degrees from appearing in the NET.

When the NET Regulations were first notified in 1991, teachers with M.Phil and PhD qualification and those expected to acquire it by December 1993 were exempted from the requirement of clearing the NET or SLET. Subsequently, the exemption for PhD holders was extended up to December 2002.

In the meantime, based on the interim recommendations of a NET review committee the UGC had in 2006 exempted all M.Phil and PhD holders from clearing the NET.

Even as late as July 2008, the UGC had decided to grant exemption to M.Phil holders up to June 30, 2009 and later an empowered committee of the UGC had decided to extend this cut-off date till December 2011.

However, suddenly last month the UGC through an amendment made NET and SLET mandatory for all candidates except for those who have been awarded a PhD degree as per its latest 2009 regulations.

In Tamil Nadu this would have serious implications as thousands of teachers with M.Phil and PhD qualification did not appear for the NET all these years relying on the exemption granted earlier. Also due to the recruitment freeze between 2001 and 2006 no teachers were appointed. Recently, the Teachers Recruitment Board had short-listed candidates based only on their M.Phil and PhD qualifications. All that will come to a naught now.

Professor C R Ravi of the Association of University Teachers has shot off a SOS letter to HRD Minister Kapil Sibal urging him to "allow the status quo ante in the matter of exemption of M.Phil as per the UGC Regulations of June 2006." Arguing for prospective implementation of the regulations, he said this was needed "so that all those who have obtained the eligibility to enter the teaching profession do not end up in a sudden death of qualification."

Source: Chennai /times of india/4th July, 2009

UGC to introduce 'Indian credit transfer system'

In a move that promises to have a far-reaching effect on the movement of students from universities in India and abroad, the University Grants Commission (UGC) has started the process of evolving an 'Indian equivalence assessment and credit transfer system'.

The idea is to have a common method for assessment of grades offered by various universities, setting parity for such credits and evolving a comprehensive model for transfer of credits. "This would ensure smooth transition of students at different levels of higher

Top

studies, from one university to another within the country and outside," Pandit Vidyasagar, director of the University of Pune's (UoP) board of college and university development (BCUD), told TOI on Friday.

"As of now, there is no set norm for working out equivalence of grades and transfer of credits," Vidyasagar said, adding that much of this was being done in an arbitrary manner by different universities.

The UGC has asked Vidyasagar to lead a four-member expert committee to work on the credit-transfer model. UGC joint director H K Chauhan had mailed a letter to this effect to the BCUD chief on July 1. "The credit-transfer model is expected to be finalised over the next six months," Vidyasagar said.

Noted academicians and scientists H C Pradhan of the Homi Bhabha Centre for Science Education, Mumbai, Vijayshri of the Indira Gandhi National Open University's school of sciences, and N Subhash of the Centre for Earth Sciences Studies, Trivandrum, are the other members of this committee.

Source: Pune /times of india/4th July, 2009

Recruitment of teachers put on hold

The state government has put on hold the recruitment process for teachers at the college level following a recent circular from the University Grants Commission (UGC) that makes it compulsory for aspirant teachers to clear National Eligibility Test (NET) or State Eligibility Test (SET) before taking up teaching at the college or the university level.

Earlier, students with a PhD and M Phil were eligible to apply for the post of teachers at the university and the college level.

In a bind over the latest UGC stipulation, the College Service Commission (CSC) has stopped the recruitment process midway and sent a note to the central body seeking clarification on the fate of the candidates who have already been recruited as teachers under the old process.

The CSC was in the process of recruiting 2,745 teachers across 419 colleges in the state on the basis of vacancies reported in 2008, a figure which is one-fourth of the overall number of posts of permanent teachers in the state.

"We have completed recruitment for 30 of the 43 subjects. Of the 2,750 posts, we have completed the recruitment process for over 1,800. But after we heard about the new UGC rules, we have stalled the recruitment process," said CSC chairman Himanshu Sekhar Ghosh.

He said the state government wrote to the UGC on July 3 and is waiting for its response. According to the CSC, half of the candidates who have appeared for the interviews possess PhD or M Phil degrees.

State's Higher Education Minister Sudarshan Roychowdhury, meanwhile, raised the issue in the Assembly.

The vice-chancellors of various universities in the state met earlier this month at the Higher Education Council but could not come to a conclusion on the issue. The council will meet again on July 12 to discuss the issue.

Following the UGC circular, Jadavpur University has also decided to stop the recruitment in the science and Arts faculty of the university. "Since UGC is the funding body, we do not want any trouble with it and we will start recruitment once we get clarification from the UGC," said a faculty member.

Source: Kolkata /expressindia.com/9th July, 2009

Sibal consults school principals on edu. reforms

HRD minister Kapil Sibal on Thursday initiated the consultation process through an open house on school reforms with principals of 30 Delhi schools.

Sibal reiterated the government's commitment to implement 25% reservation for poor children as envisaged in the Right to Education Bill. However, some of the principals did not like the idea even as they welcomed Sibal's other suggestions, especially making class X examination optional if a student wants to continue in the same school.

Sibal's suggestion that schools can have a second shift was also welcomed by the principals. "After the school time, why can't we use the building for giving skill-based training. Similarly, municipal schools can be used by private bodies who want to provide schooling. It can happen by double shifts," the minister said.

Sibal said the government would set up different groups to suggest ways for implementing the reforms which include making the class X board exam optional, evolving a new framework for teachers' education and changing the structure of higher education. He also said that quality of schools would improve significantly in three years after the RTE Bill is passed.

Sibal emphasized that in order to enable quality schooling for greater number of children, flexibility of planning is required. One idea that he threw up was private management for some dysfunctional government schools. Private managements could do this in two shifts, with one shift as a private school and the other with government school norms.

"Every school has a social responsibility for the poor students. We will discuss and find out how to implement the quota for poor students," Abha Sehegal, principal of Sanskriti School, said.

Shyama Chona, prinicipal of DPS, RK Puram, said making the class X examination optional would make the education system smooth. Sehegal felt there was a need for more consultations and discussions. Jyoti Bose of Springdales School felt that it would be difficult for a school to have some students going in for the board examination while others who would not. "A lot will depend on the kind of schools, what kind of internal assessment exists. Parents and students need to be comfortable with the level of assessment," she said.

Source: New Delhi /times of india/3rd July, 2009

Sibal learns lesson in silence

Pranab Mukherjee's silence in his budget on the education reforms proposed by human resource development minister Kapil Sibal has triggered concerns whether the ministry can meet its 100-day agenda.

Mukherjee mentioned no fresh education scheme, in stark contrast to the reforms proposed by Sibal, many of which are a part of the HRD ministry's short-term plans.

The budget allocations for the existing schemes and the long-pending schemes may prove inadequate to meet the government's expansion targets, ministry officials said.

As part of his 100-day agenda, Sibal had mentioned the National Commission for Higher Education and Research (NCHER), which would act as an overarching regulator and eventually replace the existing regulators such as the University Grants Commission (UGC).

At the time Sibal didn't specifically say he would complete the process of setting it up within 100 days, but has on other occasions indicated he would. But the absence of even a mention of the NCHER in the budget has triggered apprehensions about meeting the target.

Mukherjee was also silent on the proposed right to education bill, which too is part of Sibal's 100-day agenda. "Given the whirlwind promises made by the HRD minister, the budget's silence on the proposed reforms is surprising. It casts a cloud on the 100-day plan," a ministry official said.

Sources said the NCHER and other reform proposals might be introduced in the supplementary budget, usually presented for Parliament's approval halfway through the fiscal year. But the 100-day deadline will be over by then.

Mukherjee, however, has increased the allocation for the UGC by almost Rs 2,000 crore, indicating the government does not see the commission's role in higher education ending anytime soon.

Compared with the interim budget, higher education has been allocated Rs 2,000 crore more . The allocation for new IITs is up from Rs 200 crore to Rs 400 crore. But the extra funds may prove inadequate, since a significant chunk will be used for OBC quota-related expansion.

A scheme to offer students interest subsidy on education loans — first promised in the UPA's 2004 common minimum programme and mentioned in all budgets since 2006 — found mention today too. Progress on the scheme is likely soon, sources confirmed, but its implementation may still take time.

Source: New Delhi /telegraphindia.com/6th July, 2009

Strict norms for MPhil, PhD

In a bid to end the situation where under-qualified aspirants get MPhil and PhD degrees, University Grants Commission (UGC) has issued a notification with minimum qualifications for students who want to get these degrees.

Now, universities will have to conduct entrance tests for students in line with certain provisions. They will also have to decide on number of students instead of haphazardly granting permission.

The notification will be applicable from June 1 to all UGC-granted universities, Central and state government-run ones and colleges affiliated to them. All institutions will have to decide on minimum qualifications for selection of recognized guides as well. The number of students permitted to undertake research will depend on availability of guides.

"All universities will have to decide on number of MPhil and PhD seats in advance and publish the information as advertisements and on the website too," said a dean of Saurashtra University. For students who have cleared Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) exam, State Level Eligibility Test (SLET) and other exams, or equivalents, universities can fix separate conditions, he added.

UGC has also decided that a student can get direct admission to PhD or via MPhil. Universities will have to keep in mind reservation quota and select guides for candidates. After the entrance exam, students will have to undergo study programme for one semester, including research methods and computer skills.

Students will have to submit theses within a time limit. Before that, a summary will have to be presented. This will be open to all for criticism and suggestions, which will be incorporated in the paper. Each thesis will be checked by at least two experts, one from abroad. After satisfactory evaluation, the student will have to take on viva. After this, he or she will have to send a soft copy of the thesis paper to UGC in 30 days.

Source: Rajkot/Surat /times of india/13th July, 2009

Zero-tolerance policy towards ragging: Govt.

Government on Friday said it will follow a zero-tolerance policy towards ragging in institutions of higher education and tough regulations under the law have been put in place to deal with the menace.

"The policy of the government shall be zero tolerance for anti-social activities," HRD minister Kapil Sibal told the Rajya Sabha replying to a short duration discussion on the increasing incidents of ragging in the country.

Responding to some members' demand for a national law, he said that the UGC regulations have the backing of law which will have to be implemented by the universities and colleges.

Sibal said the stringent measures which could be enforced include rustication of a student, withholding of scholarship, derecognition of institution, debarring a student from appearing in any test and stopping of grant to the institution.

He said previously, the mindset was glossing over the issue and only trying to persuade children not to do ragging. "That mindset has changed" and now the focus is on taking strict measures to prevent such incidents, he said.

The HRD ministry has written to the Medical Council of India, Dental Council of India, Indian Nursing Council and the All India Council of Technical Education to adopt the UGC regulations against ragging, he said.

Source: New Delhi /times of india/3rd June, 2009

ANALYSIS/OPINION/INNOVATIVE PRACTICE
WALK the TALK – Kapil Sibal, Union HRD Minister

'People say I am moving too fast, but I am 18 years late (in initiating reforms in education)'
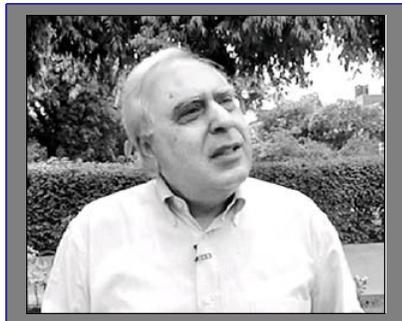
Union HRD Minister **Kapil Sibal** says reforms in the education sector should have started with the economic reforms In this interaction with *The Indian Express* Editor-in-Chief **Shekhar Gupta** on NDTV 24x7's Walk the Talk, Sibal says the Right to Education Bill will be passed in this session, the Foreign University Bill is ready and he will introduce new legislation to tackle malpractices in educational institutions

My guest this week is one of its more famous alumni of Delhi's St Stephen's College and more importantly the man with a job in this cabinet with the greatest opportunity and perhaps the greatest challenge. Kapil Sibal welcome to *Walk the Talk*.

Thank you. I entirely agree. I think it's a big challenge, a moment of great opportunity and I think if we fail now, we will fail generations to come.

On the issue of education reforms this country has not hit a sweet spot because if you read Nandan Nilekani and idea takes a long time getting accepted in India. But once it is accepted, you can't loose that moment.

That's right. Absolutely and if you loose it now, I'll tell you this is a historic moment. The country wants change. Change is required because of the enormous challenges we face. By 2020 we are going to have something like 60 million young people who should be graduates. What's going to happen to them? I wonder and I worry.

If you do nothing, nine out of ten of them will be applying for peon's jobs or will be working as security guards.

What kind of education will they get? What kind of graduates will they be? What areas should they move towards? What kind of opportunities are going to go to them? Why do we say the retail sector is the most heavily employed sector in this country? Because at the end of your B.A you can do nothing. So you ultimately say *Mein Dukaan Lagga Leta Hoon* (I'll set up a shop). We can't be a nation where all our graduates are shopkeepers. But there's no quality education, which is really the seed that takes the country forward. Everybody is clear that we need reforms in this sector, though not everyone knows what those reforms should be and how we should go about it. But everybody is clear that we need to change fast. Our school education needs to change. People have realised that its not so much quantity as quality, as ultimately it's the quality that builds the nation.

Quality that is available in reasonable quantities?

Yes

Because in this college (St Stephen's), you can get 97.76 per cent and yet not make it.

That is because of lack of expansion. This college should be three times its size. There should be three times the number of colleges. You should let other players come into the market, and not just expand their brand in India but also abroad. Why not have more quality institutions of this nature? You need to build up faculty, give impetus to faculty. You have to give space to the institutions. If you talk about autonomy, you must allow them to innovate - not just in terms of finance but in terms of the courses they

want to teach. Allow them to enter into public-private partnerships. Allow them to use the land that they have for innovative purposes. Allow them to pay their faculty.

St Stephen's college has 25 acres of land and it teaches 1,100 students.

Its too little. Nowadays in big cities you don't have colleges at one place. In Paris, you find a university that are spread across the city because there is no space. You can have a college that is spread across the city and allow public-private-partnerships. Here if the college sources money on its own, the government will say 'stop aid or the extent of the aid' . It is punished for raising its own money. This mind-set needs to change.

Can you change this within the structure of vested interests?

Where there is a will there is a way. We can change it and vested interest cannot come in the way because now all expert bodies - whether it is the Knowledge Commission or the Yashpal Committee, and even at the in Paris that I attended - everybody is talking about the same thing: Expansion, Equity and Quality. That is both the global mood and the national mood .

Tell me, your first brush with vested interests in your sector?

In higher education the stumbling block is going to be existing institutions, the bureaucracy in those institutions and those who have nurtured themselves and their interests. When I try to change the system to have an overarching independent regulatory authority by subsuming the U.G.C and the A.I.C.T.E in it you start having voices.

Because these are big rent collecting institutions.

Yes. Big rent collecting institutions. Big institutions which can stop processes from happening and feed on them. I don't mean the entire institution. I mean people within the system benefit from it hugely. We need to set up a system that distances itself from the government, and comprises academicians who know their business.

When do we see your overarching regulatory body come in.

Within six months you will see that happen. But when you are talk about higher education you are serving only about 12.4 per cent of the populace. For every 100 students completing high school education, only 12.4 each college. This 12.4 per cent goes on to create intellectual property.

You can double that?

Double it too little. Global average is 27.What you need to do is make it 30-35.

We are a country short of land, short of natural resources. We need to build our man power.

And we can because we have enormous capacities. The gross enrolment ratio in the Americas and Europe is 70. Seven-Zero. Ours is 12.4. And we are a knowledge economy?

Sixty per cent of our economy is based on service.

It is that minuscule minority that is providing the fuel for this nation. We need to expand that base. The pyramid must be large for us to move forward. So my focus in the next few months is going to be school education .Today there are two objectives that we need to look at. First we need to work with industry. Not everybody want to become Doctors or a PhD. Many of the graduates say, 'after our technical degrees we want to work or after class XII we want to work or after a polytechnic diploma we want to work'. To find opportunities for them, we need to bring the industry into the system.

There are vested interests also in the political class although they work both ways. If you look at the Parliament websites now and look at the professions MPs mention, the one found most frequently is Educationist. Many of them now own colleges, universities, deemed universities

That's true. I want to say to them 'we do not want to harm you'. There is a benchmark provided by Independent authorities. If you pass the benchmark you are free to run your institution.

Since you made your first opening statement, what is the nastiest thing that has been said to you?

'He is moving too fast'. I think those who are making that remark are reacting rather quickly. I am not moving too fast. I am 18 years late. If I can do it today, I will do it today. But the system does not allow me to do it today.

Why 18 years? Are you linking it to 1991? Are you saying education reform should have accompanied economic reform?

Yes.

One thing the tax-payers have never complained about is education cess. Everybody is willing to pay for education provided they are convinced that this will be used well.

Absolutely. Nobody is against the reform process it touches every family, every individual. So everybody has an opinion on education. People are concerned about which route should we take. Take the issue of class X, for instance. There is a lot of opinion which says. 'please don't abolish class X because we need a benchmark.

Otherwise too many schools will pass everybody.

Exactly. To that extent they are right, which is why I don't want to introduce it in every school. We are going to start with CBSE schools by the beginning of the next academic year. Then we will learn from that experience. The Medical Council of India has recommended single common entrance examination. In seven-eight years' time, you should have one exam for entry into the university system. All over Europe, students appear for one exam—they may be French, they may be German. This is because they want to standardise the exam system among allthe40countriesandalsowantmobilityofpopulation.The studentgetsadegreethatisrecognisedin allthe40countries

Why can't that happen from Karnataka to Haryana for example?

The quality of the students in the State Boards is relatively poor. The pass percentages sometimes are 27 per cent. The states are condemning students to mediocrity

They have no mobility because they don't match up to the Central Board system. There is lack of opportunity in jobs. Why do you want to condemn your own students? But this can't happen overnight, not till you improve the quality of state boards and state schools. That will take five-seven years. I want to engage with all the states and the state education ministers to see how this can be done

An impression has grown that since you made that first statement you have been backtracking?

No, not at all. I am reiterating all that I said. I am willing to have a dialogue with everybody, with all stake holders. I am willing to learn. I am willing to modulate. I am willing to say 'if this route is not acceptable we will take another route, but the objective has to be there'. The objective has to be ultimately a process which is equitous for everybody. Imagine all students in India sitting for one common exam. People are saying, 'but there is diversity in India. But what diversity is there in Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry. in Biology? When you talk about diversity maybe history and language. You can have your diversity in history and languages. But Mathematics, Biology, Zoology, Anthropology, Physics, what regional diversity are you talking about? You are just condemning your people to mediocrity. I don't think India deserves that…our people deserve that.

Going ahead, you spoke 15 days back, so 85 days left. Has your 100 day agenda changed after that opening statement?

No. The Right to education Bill will be passed in this session. I will create a legislation for malpractices in educational institutions. That is ready. It has gone for inter-ministerial consultations. The foreign university

Bill is ready. I am sending that to the Cabinet. We are working on all other policy initiatives like the independent Regulatory framework taking into account the Yashpal Committee report, the Knowledge Commission. We are going to get a report on deemed universities within ninety days and we will take action accordingly. Once the Regulatory Authority comes into the picture everything will be sorted out. We are working on the school system and the curricula.

Look at this new Central universities you are going to set up. You were trumped by your predecessor because he made all the appointments of Vice-Chancellors before the universities came in, before you came in. How do you make sure these do not become just any other new universities?

They won't. There are 20 new ones and 20 existing ones. The existing ones are to be upgraded. As far as the new ones are concerned, you may have a Vice-Chancellor who has been already appointed but everything else - the Curricula, the quality of the infrastructure, the quality of the faculty-all this has to be done

The problem of our university system is internal politics and lack of academic freedom. PhD scholars are depends on their supervisor. Much of India's research is rubbish because you just repeat what your supervisor believes in. We have cheapened our research, our higher education.

Yes. The national agenda has to be motivated to be excellent in areas where the Nation will benefit.

At least in areas like **technology, engineering, management, medical science, you have got IITs, AIIMS, IIMs, but social sciences, liberal arts you have nothing.**

I agree with you. We never looked about these courses as courses that brought about excellence in civilized society. The mindset needs to ne changed.

Forget historians and Sociologists, we are not even producing economists.

It is because we are not giving sufficient importance to the social sciences. I think they are as important as Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics or any other discipline. We need to encourage that. The reason is the possibility of employment.

From the day you got the call from the Prime Minister that this will be your job - I know you wanted this portfolio and I know how much you did not want law – till now, you feeling more encouraged or are you feeling a bit disillusioned?

Most encouraged. Not at all disillusioned.

You are not seeing limitations to the change you can bring about.

No. Nobody has said to me, 'you have taken a wrong step'. People have said 'I may not agree with you here. I may not agree with you there, but it's the right thing to do. And that is what encourages me.

Not only do you have the job with the most opportunity and challenge but you also have to job with the most support and sympathy.

Absolutely.

On that note, wising you the very best and hoping we have many more conversations not just in your alma mater but in many other St Stephens around the country.

Thank you.

Source: www.indianexpress.com/Monday, 13 July, 2009

Academia must consolidate its social responsibility role

"On a good day education can not only be useful, it can be wise," said Janyne Hodder, President of the College of the Bahamas speaking at a round table on higher education and social responsibility.

The round table, held during the World Conference on Higher Education, explored the ways in which higher education could capitalise on its role as social developer to promote peace, freedom of expression and sustainable development.

In his opening address Pierre Sané, UNESCO Assistant-Director General for Social and Human Sciences, said it was essential to see higher education in the context of the twin crises of the 21st century: severe poverty and political repression on the one hand, affecting millions of people and environmental catastrophes of historic proportions on the other. "It is the job of the university to provide human capital for society and protect freedom of thought, opinion and expression," he said.

He believed the other function of academia was to "speak truth to power." Academics were often absent from public debate when in reality they were crucial for social transformation.

"It is good to remember that universities are already agents of social responsibility but can do more," Professor Janyne Hodder said. "Universities are not ivory towers or the only experts or the handmaidens of other agencies but must remain in interactive dialogue with society."

Her concrete proposals included creating awards and a new ranking for socially responsible universities, increased and more relevant student exchanges so that, for example, someone studying global warming could witness its effects firsthand on an island like the Bahamas, and support networks for staff.

Speakers also drew attention to persistent inequalities of access. In Australia the higher education system had been reformed in 2007 but still had not reached poorer, indigenous and rural people, said Denise

Bradley, Emeritus Professor and former vice-Chancellor and President of the University of Australia.

She said it was the job of universities to be both competitive and fair and to intervene in the cycle of social disadvantage.

Axel Didriksson, Mexican Secretary of Education, said that in order to improve access and relevance universities needed to make drastic changes in curricula and teaching and learning processes and be open to introducing more cross-cutting study subjects.

Countries emerging from years of conflict had lost faith in the power of academia, said David Francis, Director of the Africa Center for Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Bradford

"In my country, Sierra Leone, a market woman said to me 'If university is so important how come we have this terrible and bloody civil war?' Peace is the most important currency in post conflict situations. Without peace there is no security, no sustainable development, no change."

He said people were clamouring for universities for have a more visible, long-term engagement with the community but so far in Africa they had not invested sufficiently in peace education.

Fadia Kiwan, Professor at St Joseph's University, Beirut, Lebanon, said market forces and the mission to meet social expectations need not be in opposition.

"Intellectuals must be the conscience of a society," she said. "They must be a fifth estate which helps to civilise our times."

However, universalizing access was not a guarantee of quality. She said there was an equal danger in creating false hopes through low quality education and training which could lead to disappointment and radicalization.

Rounding up the event, Ramu Damodaran from UNDP highlighted an existing initiative working in the field of social responsibility. The UN's Academic Impact initiative aligns higher education institutes with the UN under ten universally accepted principles. He said the academic community had the potential to become a fourth UN after governments, the secretariat and NGOs.

"There is no academic discipline which is so esoteric or abstruse that it cannot have a larger sense of global purpose," he said.

Source: Paris /unesco.org/7th July, 2009

Academics slam Yashpal Report as 'neo-liberal'

The Prof Yashpal Committee Report, which suggests measures for restructuring higher education in the country, does not seem to have found much favour with academics in the city.

The Committee which comprised 26 members, some from IIMs, IITs and private bodies, submitted its final report last month, almost 16 months of being instated. According to Human Resource Development Minister Kapil Sibal, the report seeks to show a roadmap for the future of education in India.

But Prof G Haragopal, general secretary of AP Save Education Committee (APSEC), begged to differ.

"We had high hopes on the Yashpal Panel Report. Though the first report looked convincing, the final report was very disappointing," Prof Haragopal said. The AP Save Education Committee organised a round-table discussion on the report in Hyderabad. The conference was attended by distinguished professors, educationists and leaders of the Teachers Association.

One of the Yashpal Committee recommendations is to stop establishment of any new deemed university which are mushrooming in the private sector sans standards.

Though the Save Education Committee members felt that the Yashpal report did give a comprehensive understanding of what a university ought to be, they felt that the report has succumbed to the neo-liberal agenda of the ruling classes. This is because the report suggests giving permission to international universities to set up base in the country.

The report proposes to establish a single all-India higher education body and abolish present bodies like UGC, AICTE, MCI and AICTE. The APSEC members felt concentrating all the powers in a single body would be handy for both religious fundamentalists and market fundamentalists to carry forward their designs.

Haragopal felt that the present education system has given undue importance to the private sector.

"If you read the Yashpal Report, you can conclude that not much importance has been laid on social conditions and equality. There is also no mention of poor students." The report also proposed public private participation in the higher education sector.

Prof Kodanda Ram, Department of Political Science, Osmania University observed, "The danger of misusing is more in these partnerships and the report should be reviewed properly. If we have a final look at the report, it suggests that the public-private partnership can deliver the best system of education." Kodanda Ram felt that Kapil Sibal was leaning towards pro-market policies and felt the recently concluded Budget had fuelled his suspicion.

The APSEC members demanded that the report should not be implemented until it is put up for a nation-wide debate.

Source: Hyderabad /expressbuzz.com/10th July, 2009

The top minds at a profit - A dissenting note to the Yash Pal committee report

The broad ideas outlined in the main report of the committee to advise on renovation and rejuvenation of higher education in India — such as forming an apex body for managing India's higher-education sector, nurturing inter-disciplinarity and extending university education to much larger and diverse segments of the population — are commendable. My apprehension, however, is that without more detailed plans of action and sharper targets, these broad aims will remain unfulfilled, like so many well-meaning previous pronouncements. There are many areas where we need reform and which have been dealt with in the main report. What I mention here are items which, in my opinion, deserve consideration, but are omitted or not emphasized in the report, and also some fine points on which I have a difference of opinion.

Till a few decades ago, India's higher education system stood out for its excellence, not only in comparison to developing countries but also to some industrialized nations. The high economic growth that India has witnessed since 1994 has several causes; one of them is our good higher education. Unfortunately, this sector is now faltering. Several nations that trailed India on this score are now ahead of it. This is not because India has changed, but because India has not changed while others have. If our nation's development is to be sustained and we want to be a progressive and enlightened nation, then it is imperative that we reform our system of higher education.

First, the main report speaks about the need for greater autonomy for colleges and universities. However, one stumbling block for this objective is the huge power vested in the University Grants Commission and the All India Council for Technical Education. There is need for these organizations to divest themselves of some of this power. Also, there should be a refocusing of their main function. It is the responsibility of the UGC to maintain the quality of our higher education and research. However, this must be achieved by nurturing excellence instead of spending a disproportionate amount of energy creating barriers to entry and preventing new colleges and universities from coming into existence. The latter has led to the creation of what is effectively a 'licensing system' in higher education. Just as India gave up on industrial licensing in the early Nineties (and thereby unleashed growth), the reformed UGC and AICTE should give up on the licensing of higher education. At times, we forget that the market, with all its faults, does perform certain functions reasonably well. Poorly performing colleges and educational institutes, if information about their performance is made easily available, will

be competed out of existence by the pressures of the market.

For this reason, one principal activity of a revised UGC should be to rate universities and institutes of higher education. As we know from the modern industrial sector, good-quality rating is vital for the economy, and successful nations spend a lot to collate information and rate corporations. The UGC should, likewise, produce and publicize ratings of and information about all universities and institutes of higher education. This should be a detailed, annual exercise and be prominently available on a website.

While the United States of America has arguably the world's greatest universities, it also has many sub-par ones. The existence of the latter does not harm the reputation of the US as a nation of academic excellence. If there was a perfect way for the state to efficiently weed out the bad, I would be for it. But as we learnt from our experience with industrial licensing, often the effort to weed out the bad by using bureaucratic control can do more harm than good.

Second, we have to recognize that it is not possible for any government, let alone the government of a developing nation, to run over 300 universities with equal generosity. Such an agendum is bound to cause either a fiscal breakdown or doom the university system to mediocrity. It follows from this that we have to reconcile ourselves to the differential treatment of institutions and universities and also of individuals. This has to be based on a transparent system of objective evaluation, so that every individual and every university has the same opportunity. But to expect the outcome to be the same across individuals and universities is to court failure.

This takes us to the touchy topic of salaries and research support. The old system of a flat scale, where every professor was supported in the same way across all the over-300 universities, was once an attractive idea. It is no longer feasible. On the one hand, most nations are switching over to the system of special salaries and research budgets for 'star' researchers and professors. This began with the US. Now other nations, including Britain and even China, have switched to this. On the other hand, corporate salaries have gone through the roof. Given these facts, if we want to attract top talent to research and teaching, we have to allow for pay differentials. The exact modality of this will entail discussion and debate.

Two ways of doing this are: first, designating, say, 20 universities, as centres of excellence and putting them on a higher funding scale. The list of top 20 should be evaluated and revised every three years so that all universities stand a chance of getting there. The second option is to select a small number of professors in each field from the entire nation and place them on a higher salary and research support. By 'higher salary' I do not mean 5 or 10 per cent higher, but three or four times the regular professorial salary. This will create incentives for academics to work harder and also attract top minds that would have gone to the corporate sector to come into academics and research. If this system is properly managed, it can transform the quality of India's higher education. Further, this can be achieved with no additional fiscal burden. The average salary of all professors all over India can be held constant and this achieved by simply creating a graded salary system.

Third, we should allow private-sector money to come into higher education. Surreptitious privatization is already a fact of life. It will be better to let this happen openly; there can then also be open monitoring. The purely private colleges should of course not be subsidized by the State. They should be allowed to set college fees as high as they choose (as long as this is made transparent). It is true that such private colleges will end up teaching mainly commercially viable subjects and cater to relatively rich students. There is no harm in this and some advantages, since the State will now be able to allocate more money to the colleges and universities under its charge and provide good education to the remainder at a lower cost.

There is an additional question: should we allow these private colleges to be profit-making organizations, that is, allow the owners or the shareholders to openly keep the profit to them? A common presumption is that if someone is interested in profit, that person will not be interested in providing good education. This is a fallacy. It is like assuming that if Tata Motors is interested in making profit, it will not be interested in producing a good small car. However, in reality, its interest in producing a good small car could be because it is interested in making profits. Likewise, in education; if a profit-making company wants to start a university, there is no reason why we should not allow this. This is an idea that should at least be on the table. There are not too many examples of such universities in the world. This can be a pioneering effort on the part of India and, if successful, can cause a huge infusion of funds into our higher education system.

Finally, this is the time to consider steps to make India into the world's major hub for higher education. Given our historic (though eroding) advantage in higher education, our strength in the English language and our low cost of living, it is possible for India to position itself as a major destination for students from around the world, not just from poor countries, but rich, industrialized nations, such as Korea, Britain and even the US. One reason why an African student goes to the US to study is to then acquire the right to stay on there and work. Attracting such a student will not be

easy. But consider an American student who anyway has the right to go back to the US and work there. In the US, each year of education costs approximately, $50,000 or Rs 25 lakh. If India can build some good universities with high quality residences for students and advertise globally, India can give this market tough competition. If India charges tuition fees of Rs 5 lakh per annum from foreign students, then with all other overheads a student can get quality education for Rs 8 lakh per annum, which is a third of the cost in the US. There is clearly a huge comparative advantage in this and the scheme can attract lots of students to India. This can bring in a large infusion of money, which can make it possible for the Indian government to subsidize the higher education of Indian students and vastly expand the number of Indian students who get university education.

Source: Kolkata /telegraphindia.com/1st July, 2009

Allow regulated foreign players into higher education: Economic Survey

Seeking regulatory reforms in higher education, the Economic Survey has suggested that quality foreign players should be allowed in the sector.

The report has said that there should be reforms in the regulatory framework and regulatory institutions for higher education.

Such a move would help in focussing on "providing honest and transparent quality rating and information on financial costs", it said.

The survey called for allowing "regulated entry of high quality foreign and rated domestic institutions to provide higher education".

Moreover, the report has pointed out that rating the quality of educational institutions and all education service providers could be helpful for the whole sector.

Regarding prestigious institutions like the IITs and the IIMs, the survey said there is a need to streamline the admission procedure for such entities.

The streamlining of the admission procedure should also ensure that the quality of student intake does not suffer.

"Intake should be based on entrance examination which tests the aptitude to grasp knowledge and not the knowledge itself," the report noted.

The survey stressed that the number of higher education institutions could be increased through the entry of private players and ensures that their degrees are internationally accepted.

In addition, the government's funds for higher education should be used for promoting scientific and technical education apart from encouraging R&D in all subjects.

"There is an urgent need for replacement of bureaucratic controls in education by professional regulators along with private-public partnership to ensure universal primary education," it added.

Source: New Delhi /economictimes/2nd July, 2009

An elementary and primary concern

The Union Budget 2009-10 shies away from key allocations to elementary and primary education. This is nothing new, feels R C Jain, president, Delhi State Public Schools Management Association. According to Jain, "What we essentially need is a focus on building sound infrastructure and providing basic amenities." Even though the national consultation talks about providing facilities to schemes like Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (KGBVs) and the recommendation of the national evaluation of Mahila Samakhya Programme (MSP), the budget seems to ignore it.

Says Gouri Srivastava, professor, department of women's studies, NCERT: "How do we address the problem of an increasing dropout rate in schools at the elementary and primary level if we choose to ignore issues of infrastructure, medical support and so on? So, the allocated budget (Rs 750 per child), Srivastava feels, is not enough as "it doesn't match the cost of living index, which is rising."

Most developed countries in the world like the US, UK and France spend around 6-7% of their national budget for public education and health, while India allocates around 3% for education and around 1% for health. As Dipankar Majumdar, director, Child Rights and You (CRY) points out, "When we emulate first-world economic growth, we must realise that economic growth is meaningless unless it reaches 70% of India's poorest."

The total allocation for school education and health is well below the need of 10% of GDP to be allocated to school education and health. Public spending on basic rights is not just good policy, but also good economics, feels Majumdar, since an educated, healthy India will in turn enable a robust economy. "Given UPA's people-friendly image, an example of which is the increased outlay for the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA), we expect the government to live up to its potential," says Majumdar, adding that the central government's allocation for 40% of India's population, its children, remains at 5.09% and "the state budget allocations will not make up for the needs."

The Constitution also places more importance on primary education, points out R P Malik, chairman, Federation of Public Schools. He says: "There should be an end of public unaided schools. The government

should utilise the money towards its government Schools."

Source: New Delhi /times of india/13th July, 2009

Class X Boards: To Be or Not To Be?

Reams of paper have already been devoted to the debate on whether eradicating the Class X Boards is a good idea, and making the 10th boards optional help make any difference to the education system in India. Will having a single Board through out the country help homogenising the education culture, and will the states agree to the proposal? Certain voices have starting coming in from various states in the country.

Amid all the hoopla, is the average Delhi student excited? Is he/she happy about Sibal's proposal? Educational experts, principals have all weighed the pros and cons of having the system. A student is, however, lost somewhere in the debate. Quest takes a look at all the sides of the debate and brings to you a student's perspective.

Days after Human Resource Development Minister Kapil Sibal called for making the Class X Boards optional and setting up of an alternative evaluation system based on percentiles rather than percentages, the move was revered and reviled in equal measure by different quarters.

While on one hand, a section welcomed the minister's move, on the other there were apprehensions raised by various schools, educational experts and policy makers.

Even as Kapil Sibal proposed one board for the entire country, there was speculation about the implementation of this plan. There was also confusion regarding the autonomy of the private schools.

"The minister has not made a clear-cut policy on how much autonomy will be given to the schools," said Vandana Puri, Principal, Salvan Public School, Karol Bagh. The issue of who will be giving percentiles to students, whether it will be the CBSE or the schools has not been made clear by the minister either.

In the schools of the West, the percentile system of evaluation is already in place. The ministry's decision to eliminate Class X Boards and to implement the percentile system received flak as well. "We cannot blindly follow the western countries, the infrastructure has to be there to support an alternative system," said another principal from of a Delhi private school who did not want to be named.

A few of the private schools in Delhi are left in a fix after Kapil Sibal's statement. His stance regarding the selection of stream after Class X be left to the student and not the school has also angered a particular section.

"We have limited seats in each stream. There is a rat race for certain streams among the students. The child at such a young age does not know his aptitude, and this is where the school's decision to put him in different streams comes in," said Puri.

A debate has already been raging about the allocation of streams by schools. Schools asking the students to go for a certain stream have been in the line of fire for quite some time. "A school knows a child, the teachers know the child's aptitude, a school should be the one to help the child make the choice," said another private school principal who did not wish to be named.

There were suggestions regarding a proper link between school education and the university level education as well. "If all students want to opt for the science stream in Class XI, does the government have enough medical colleges to accommodate all students?" asked another principal of a private Delhi school.

Does the percentile system of evaluation or the grading system raise or decrease the level of education? "Students who study will study anyways," said Usha Ram, Principal, Laxman Public School. "It won't have much effect on the standard." However, the grading system will help ease the pressure on the student.

There is a flip side. Making the Class X Boards optional might create problems for students who want to change their Board after their Class X exams. The move of scrapping the Class X exam will prove to be damaging for them "Students who want to switch Boards and join junior colleges will have a problem. Class X Boards gave a logical and objective way of transferring from one Board to another," said Sumit Mehta, CEO, Zee Learn.

Although the CBSE's move of changing the pattern of question paper few years ago has been welcomed, many are of the opinion that the emphasis has to be shifted from rote learning to real knowledge. "Saying that eliminating the Class X Boards will relieve parents and students of stress are not a solution. Emphasis should shift from rote learning and that is the only way to lessen the burden," says Mehta. Sibal had used the word "traumatic" for the tenth Boards.

However, there was some appreciation from certain quarters as well. "The Boards did put unnecessary pressure on students and parents and because of the fear of the Boards, some students from poorer backgrounds drop out of schools. This step will help in checking the dropout rate," said D K Tiwari, Secretary of Delhi Government School Teachers Association. "Suicide rates among students may come down as well."

Sara Alvi, a Class IX student is happy about the proposal. "Thankfully the Boards will now be done

away with." Many other students like Sara are happy about Sibal's proposal as well.

It has become a routine for parents and children to consult counsellors just before the commencement of the Class X Boards. A number of helplines make their presence felt during the exam season. In more ways than one, doing away with the Class X Board exams is by and large in favour of the students.

Having said that, many Delhi students also wish the Board exams are not scrapped. They say the Class X Boards are a preparation for Class XII Boards.

Kapil Sibal's proposal of making tenth Boards optional comes in the wake of Yashpal Committee's submitting of its report. The Yashpal Committee was set in February 2008 to study and suggest measures to revamp higher education in the country. The committee submitted its report on June 24. Kapil Sibal had said he would implement the recommendations of the report within 100 days.

Professor Yashpal, who headed the Yashpal Committee, speaking to Newsline, said, "This is a very small, trivial recommendation we have made in the report. There are bigger and more impactful recommendations in the report. I don't remember exactly what is written in the report, but we do believe that too many examinations are useless," he said. "It is not a good idea to have two Boards."

Source: New Delhi /expressindia.com/2nd July, 2009

UNESCO Conference calls for higher education action

The past decade has provided evidence that higher education and research contribute to the eradication of poverty, to sustainable development and to progress towards reaching global development goals, says the final communiqué of the 2009 UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education. It outlines 15 calls for action by states ranging from adequate investment and better working conditions for academics to combating the brain drain and degree mills.

There are also seven calls on UNESCO to take action that the communiqué says should reaffirm the priority of higher education in its future programmes and budgets. This was a promise made by Director-General Koïchiro Matsuura after the document's adoption by 150 states.

Matsuura said the most severe economic crisis in 80 years also offered opportunities: "It has shown us that cooperation is not only necessary, it is the sine qua non of getting back on track".

The World Conference demonstrated that higher education cannot be seen in isolation - from other levels of education or from socio-economic and other

realities - and that it is not monolithic but has a wide range of purposes, he added.

The communiqué recognises the strategic role of higher education by calling on governments to commit sufficient resources to the sector while also encouraging diversification.

"This is crucial. Higher education must provide access for all," Matsuura said. "Access and quality must be addressed hand-in-hand. The communiqué stresses frameworks for quality assurance mechanisms that respect cultural diversity."

Finally, it emphasises flexibility and innovation, the need to establish regional higher education areas, to counter the brain-drain and to foster peace and development.

Regional conferences held by UNESCO to prepare for the World Conference showed that the same problems occurred around the world, said General Rapporteur Professor Suzy Halimi, Director of the Institut du Monde Anglophone at the Université Sorbonne Nouvelle - Paris 3.

"So the forum was a way of thinking together about common challenges. But there were also specific regional challenges, so there is a need to avoid standardised solutions." Africa was a conference priority and it was imperative to act to support higher education on the continent.

There were six powerful messages from the conference, Halimi said.

The first two messages were for politicians and states. First, they must preserve higher education as a major investment in the future and as a public good, even though the private sector can make a contribution: "Do not relent in effort, even in a crisis," she stressed. Then they must give international solidarity its full meaning by finding innovative ways of financing and helping developing countries to build quality higher education.

The second two messages were for higher education institutions. First, they need to clearly define objectives and aim for excellence in fields of speciality. "Second, train your teachers, recognise their status, enhance their image and pay them a good wage. Do not believe that technology, however good, can ever replace human teachers, face to face. We all know this."

The third two messages were for UNESCO. First, recognise the role of higher education in education as a whole and accord the sector its place in programmes and budgets. Second, UNESCO must play its roles to the fullest - standard-setting, rules of good practice, assisting countries that are trying to develop higher education, and being an observatory and collector and diffuser of good practices and statistics as tools of transparency.

The communiqué

In its preamble, the final communiqué says: "Higher education as a public good and strategic imperative for all levels of education and the basis for research, innovation and creativity must be a matter of responsibility and economic support of all governments". Further, higher education must be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit as stressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The document expresses concern that the "economic downturn may widen the gap in access and quality between developed and developing countries, and within countries, presenting additional challenges to countries where access is already restricted. At no time in history has it been more important to invest in higher education as a major force in building an inclusive and diverse knowledge society and to advance research, innovation and creativity."

The communiqué goes on to describe in some detail issues and challenges in five areas: the social responsibility of higher education, access, equity and quality, internationalisation, regionalisation and globalisation, learning, research and innovation, and higher education in Africa.

It then moves on to call for specific actions by UNESCO member states, and by UNESCO itself. Below are slightly edited versions of the draft final communiqué.

Call for action: Member states

Member states, working in collaboration with all stakeholders, should develop policies and strategies at systems and institutional levels to:

a) Maintain and, if possible, increase investment in higher education to sustain quality and equity at all times and foster diversification in the provision of higher education and the means of funding.

b) Ensure adequate investments in higher education and research to reflect growing expectations and societal needs.

c) Put in place and strengthen appropriate quality assurance systems and regulatory frameworks with the involvement of all stakeholders.

d) Scale up pre-service and in-service teacher training with curricula that equip teachers to prepare students as responsible citizens.

e) Guarantee women's access to higher education as well as their participation and success.

f) Guarantee equal access to under-represented groups such as workers, the poor, minorities, the differently-abled, migrants, refugees and other vulnerable populations.

g) Development mechanisms to counteract the negative impact of the brain-drain while encouraging academic, staff and student mobility.

h) Support greater regional cooperation in higher education conducive to the establishment and strengthening of regional higher education and research areas.

i) Empower least developed countries and small island developing states to benefit from the opportunities offered by globalisation and foster collaboration between them.

j) Pursue the goals of equity, quality and success by developing more flexible entry pathways and assuring better recognition of prior learning and work experience.

k) Enhance the attractiveness of the academic career by ensuring respect for the rights and adequate working conditions of academic staff in accordance with the 1997 recommendation concerning the status of higher education teaching personnel.

l) Assure active student participation in academic life, ensuring freedom of expression and the right of organisation, and provide adequate student services.

m) Combat degree mills through multi-pronged action at national and international levels.

n) Develop more flexible and organised research systems that promote science excellence and inter-disciplinarity, and that serve society.

o) Support the full integration of ICTs and promote open and distance learning to meet the increasing demands of higher education.

Call for action: UNESCO

UNESCO - within its five functions of being a laboratory of ideas, a catalyst for international cooperation, a standard-setter, capacity-builder and clearing house - should:

a. Assist with the formulation of long-term, sustainable strategies for higher education and research in tune with internationally agreed development goals and national-regional needs.

b. Provide platforms for dialogue and the sharing of experience and information on higher education and research, and assist in building capacity in the formulation of higher education and research policies.

c. Help government and institutions to address international issues in higher education, such as:

⇒ Continuing to implement its standard-setting instruments, in particular the new generation of regional conventions for recognition of qualifications, and the 1997 Recommendation

Concerning the Status of Higher Education Teaching Personnel.

⇒ Pursuing its work in capacity-building for quality assurance in developing countries.

⇒ Fostering international collaboration in teacher education in all regions, especially in Africa through Teacher Training in Sub-Saharan Africa.

⇒ Encouraging the transfer of knowledge through UNITWIN Networks and UNESCO Chairs, in collaboration with other agencies, to further capacity development to realise internationally agreed goals such as Education for All, the Millennium Development Goals and the United Nation's Decades.

d. Encourage international mobility and exchanges of students and staff, while developing strategies to counteract the negative impact of brain-drain.

e. Enhance student participation in UNESCO forums and support global student dialogue.

f. Ensure a follow-up to the 2009 World Conference on Higher Education by: identifying the most important issues and priorities for immediate action, monitoring trends, reforms and new developments, and promoting regional integration and academic cooperation; and by supporting the creation and development of regional areas of higher education and research and strengthening regional UNESCO units in coordination with existing networks.

g. Reinforce and extend the UNESCO-ADEA Task Force for Higher Education in Africa, which includes major partners and donors to developing countries from other regions, to ensure effective follow-up to the 2009 World Conference on Higher Education and go beyond talk and recommendations.

Source: Paris /universityworldnews.com/12th July, 2009

Educating the educators

Madhav Chavan in his article on reforming primary education ('Wiping the slate clean', IE, June 25) has asked the government to think afresh the Right to Education Bill as well as the current Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan programme. Here, I focus on our methods to train teachers. The devastating impact of norms-based funding is most evident in this arena. Our pre-service teacher education system needs a major overhaul. Country-wide, teacher-training programmes are offered increasingly by private (self-financed) institutions which have seen an exponential growth in the last decade. Neither the Centre nor the state governments have been able to regulate the quality of new institutions. Most of them are small teaching or diploma giving shops without qualified faculty. There is

little transparency in the sanctioning process leading to suspicion about the way permissions were given. Educationists, administrators and people who run schools (government and private) admit that the quality of teachers coming out of these institutions is extremely poor.

As a result we today have thousands of young people who graduated from these institutions, but ended up learning little. The impact of this is felt by our schools—the quality of teachers appointed has steadily gone down, resulting in further dilution of standards. It is a fairly well known and documented fact that many teachers who join have poor subject knowledge and the training they receive does not prepare them to work. They learn a few theories to pass examinations, have little hands-on experience of working in multi-grade schools or in classrooms where there is enormous diversity among the children. The institutions they study in does not familiarise them (leave alone prepare them) for the real situation in the thousands of schools in rural and urban areas.

Central to this situation is the role of the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) which became a statutory body in 1993 to promote "planned and coordinated development, regulation and proper maintenance of norms and standards in the teacher education system throughout the country" (from the NCTE Act of 1993). It has both academic and regulatory functions. Its academic functions include conducting studies and recommending strategies for teacher education, promoting innovations and research in teacher education and formulating schemes and identifying recognised institutions for teacher development programmes. The regulatory functions include according recognition for teacher education institutions and courses, laying down guidelines for compliance, laying down norms for courses and minimum eligibility criteria, evolving an appraisal system and "taking all necessary steps to prevent commercialisation of teacher education." Here is a body that was created to regulate and set standards. But what really happened was quite the opposite. A committee constituted in 2007-08 to review the functioning of NCTE recommended an overhaul.

Given the long history of the merging of the roles of standard-setters, regulators and administrators (NCTE being a classic example) there is a need to reform the way regulatory bodies are created and administered. The recently released Yashpal Committee report on higher education is reported to have made similar observations on other regulatory bodies that ended up becoming gate keepers for vested interests, such as the AICTE and UGC. The Human Resources Development Minister needs to look at similar entities in teachers' education.

India today needs an autonomous academic standard setting regime, one that is outside the direct administrative control of the ministry or its ancillary bodies like NCERT. We need one that cannot metamorphose into a government department and end up perpetuating the problem. There is a need to create a body that draws on eminent educationists, academics, practicing teachers and social activists engaged in education. This body should monitor whether standards are being adhered to and generate public pressure for compliance through periodic research-based reports on quality — not only with respect to learning outcomes in schools but also management audit of government funded institutions starting from the cluster and block level resource centres, the state councils for educational research and training and the NCERT. Developing benchmarks accessible to all should be part of the mandate of the new regulatory body.

There are precedents in the country. In the area of child nutrition the painstaking work done by the Right to Food campaign and the Commissioners appointed by the Supreme Court of India play a significant role in monitoring what is happening on the ground. Similarly, a process is needed to bring together independent and experienced people with a high degree of commitment and track record of working in school education.

Central to this is a consensus on the minimum "non-negotiable" standard for schools and pre-schools, for teacher qualification (including subject knowledge) and for student assessment processes. The government needs to guard against opting for the least common denominator and firmly advocate high standards at all levels and in all kinds of schools and institutions. A resolve from the government to make sure that even the poorest and the most disadvantaged child can access quality education — and will be taught by a qualified and trained teacher — will go a long way in doing away with the hierarchies of schools (regular schools, alternative schools) and teachers.

Source: New Delhi /indianexpress.com/1st July, 2009

Going the 'Indian' way!

Catch 'em young! Well, this seems to be the latest mantra of schools across the country, or at least, the Kendriya Vidyalayas (KVs), which are teach them young planning to include lessons against corruption and terrorism in their curriculum.

It looks like schools are finally waking up to two sensitive issues the nation is currently facing. With intelligence reports putting the nation on the terror radar, and bribery and corruption scandals tarnishing the image of the country, this move seems to have come at the right time.

The positive response received for its Integrity Club (which taught ethical values like love, compassion and respect to students) seems to be the reason for the Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan to implement classes on terrorism and corruption in all its schools. Reports say that KVS has also prepared a 129-page manual for its students from class six to nine. S Vijay Kumar of KVS Bangalore had said in a report, "Our main focus is on integrity and how to live well in society."

Parents and teachers are elated and welcome this step. "The present generation does not have good role models. This step couldn't have been implemented at a better time. As the programme draws anecdotes from the lives of prominent personalities like Gandhi ji, it will help children imbibe good values and inspire them to become socially responsible citizens. It will also enable them to avoid becoming party to corruption and terrorism," beams Nirmala V, a parent.

Echoing her sentiments is Professor CR Jayaprakash, who says, "The cut-throat business ethics of today leaves no time to think about values. Hence, strengthening value education is definitely a welcome move."

Although people are delighted about the move, some believe that implementing this rule in Class 6 is quite early. "To expose children to sensitive subjects like terrorism and corruption at a young age is untimely.

The maturity of a Class 6 student will be much lower than a student in Class 10. Introduction to perceptive subjects at a young age may even confuse children. The move needs to be dealt with carefully," reasons Nisha Tamiloli, education counsellor.

Seconding her thoughts is Vidya Ravishankar, a parent. "It all depends on how children are taught. Also, students should be monitored carefully from time to time."

But the idea isn't totally rubbish for Nisha. "While I agree it is a noble initiative, we have to adopt a wait-and-watch approach to see how far this will go in curbing terrorism and corruption. On the other hand, implementing this step in colleges would be a better option," she adds.

K Vijay Kumar, a former KV student, says, "I don't think it's a premature move as children today are more informed about national issues, thanks to media exposure. However, the method of teaching these lessons through poems and story narration is not really appealing." He also provides an alternative,

"Teachers can spread the message by organising skits, dance and songs as a part of the co-curricular activities. Then, there will be more Indian that has in school," says Vijay.

Source: Potpourri /times of india/5th July, 2009

Higher education sector in a state of flux

In the current scenario of globalisation and mushrooming of educational enterprises, the higher education

sector worldwide is in a state of flux. It has become increasingly international over the past decade, dominated significantly by private sector participation. Such liberalised attempt has made the market competitive not only in terms of service, quality and price but also in terms of student accessibility and eligibility.

The need of the hour is to provide quality education and at the same time address the widening skills gap within various industries by making higher education more relevant to the needs of a knowledge society.

Representatives from both academia and industry came together to address a wide range of the above mentioned issues and more at The Economic Times 'EDVANTAGE 2009', a conference on higher education, held recently in the Capital.

D Purandeswari, minister of state, human resource development (HRD), expressed concern at India's low gross enrolment ratio (GER) in higher education. She emphasised that a high GER was imperative for a sustainable economy. Besides, she pointed out that the issues of concern were accessibility, faculty requirement, quality, and need for proper planning in the education sector.

Discussing the need for building excellence in the educational system to meet knowledge challenges of the 21st century, Praveen Vishakantaiah, president, Intel Technology India Pvt Ltd, reiterated the fact that there was no dearth of talent, opportunities or aspiration in India. However, he said, there was an urgent need to focus on teacher capacity building, employability of talent and research and innovation.

SK Barua, director, IIM-Ahmedabad, touched upon the issue of the quality of graduates that India has been producing and how under-prepared they were to participate in the nation-building process. Quality of education in schools, he insisted, should improve. Barua also urged the need for a curriculum change along with a student-centric pedagogy.

In keeping with the theme of the inaugural plenary session, 'Revamping and reassessing institutes of higher learning: Addressing the constraints in quality' Deepak Pental, vice-chancellor, Delhi University, said that with the government increasing the salary of teachers, it is likely to attract more people to the profession. Apart from urging the need for academic and industry partnerships, he also stressed that there should be a uniform four-year degree as also an interface between science and technology and, natural sciences and maths in the area of higher education.

He said the focus should be on attracting and retaining talent in India and this can be done only when they are given the opportunity to pursue contextual research, which requires funding.

Sukhdeo Thorat, chairman, University Grants Commission (UGC), stressed on the role of the private sector in higher education. Also, he stressed on issues of access, quality and relevance.

The other sessions at the conference explored issues like building centres of excellence with international collaborations, technology-based education: growth driver for Indian economy, and strengthening PPP initiatives at tertiary level while making education affordable. Sandhya Chintala, director, Education Initiative, Nasscom; Kiran Datar, former advisor, National Knowledge Commission, and VN Rajsekharan Pillai were some of the speakers at the conference, among others. Educationtimes.com was the online knowledge partner.

Source: Chennai /times of india /13th July, 2009

Massive government investment, teachers needed

The education system needs not just the entry of foreign universities or integration of boards but a refurbishment of the existing system.

Kapil Sibal has spoken. In one succinct statement, the human resource development minister has proposed scrapping the class X board exams, getting rid of the state boards in favour of one centralized board, changing from marks to grades, radically restructuring higher education, allowing foreign universities, expanding the role of the private sector and providing equal opportunity for all students. All this, as well as making education compulsory!

He is being extremely brave. None of his proposed reforms is new and some have been knocking around awaiting government action for decades. Most have been considered in the past and shelved.

The change to one centralized board of examination is considered by many to be neither desirable nor practicable. At present, the Central Board of Secondary Education, or CBSE, only serves a tiny minority of children and a vast majority opts for the numerous state boards, the National Institute of Open Schooling, or NIOS, or the ICSE/ISC (Indian Certificate of Secondary Education/Indian School Certificate) programmes.

For the wealthy, the trend is towards the International General Certificate of Secondary Education, or IGCSE, and the International Baccalaureate.

In the past, the proposed move to one centralized state board has been vigorously resisted by the states, which have argued that numerous local differences must be incorporated into any

teaching/examination system and the more local the influence on education, the better.

The minister's desire to relieve the stress we are putting our children under is commendable and any consideration that takes us away from exam-centred education must be welcomed. However, most of the stress comes not from having to sit in an exam, but from having to do extremely well in these in order to stand a chance of getting into a good college/job. The minister does recognize this and proposes to revamp and expand the number of colleges. However, his proposals will not create the many millions of good-quality places that the country needs, and the vested interests in the present system will seek to maintain the status quo and produce strong resistance.

Scrapping class X board exams will require development of a different method of assessing and reporting how well a child has done in school—a daunting prospect for individual schools and one requiring good planning and a massive amount of work, time and resources.

Replacing the marking system by grades for classes IX and X in schools affiliated to CBSE is a tiny step in the right direction, but may not be greeted by many parents as a step forward. For example, at the moment, they know if their child obtained 89% or 80% in the exam. Under the new system, they will only know that their child scored between 80% and 89%.

The minister's desire for equal education is also commendable but, sadly, our education system is designed to give a massive advantage to the children of the wealthy. Providing a modicum of equality of opportunity would cost far more than the country can afford in the foreseeable future, and a complete restructuring of the education system. Similarly with the minister's wish for compulsory education of all children.

Only 30% of Indian adults have spent their childhood in school. Primary school enrolment is now 100%, but some 55% drop out before the beginning of secondary school, and in secondary school, attendance is only 50%. If all our children spent their childhood in school, the student-teacher ratio would be 168:1—at least 10 times more than it is in many countries.

Providing education for all our children until the age of 14 will need a stupendous level of investment to develop the many thousands of new schools and millions more new teachers.

Previous governments more or less gave up on providing education for all our children. In many areas, education is replaced by literacy schemes under the pretence that being able to read and write your own name is somehow similar to having an education. Schooling for the poor (where it exists) is mostly irrelevant, substandard and grossly under-resourced.

The minister does recognize that schooling for the poor is underfunded and badly managed. And that is the reason he is calling for more businesses to build and operate schools. However, the lack of decent education facilities throughout the country means that the private sector can't come close to meeting the needs of all our children.

So what should the new minister do? For a start, he needs to ensure that the two million new teachers necessary to meet the 2015 target of universal primary education are recruited and trained. But that should simply be the first step.

The country needs massive government investment and millions more teachers. It also requires a viable system of maintenance, refurbishment and replacement of existing provision. Tinkering will not do.

Our education system was not designed for an egalitarian democracy and we need fundamental changes. Luckily, we have plenty of foreign models to guide us. Most advanced countries once had a system such as ours but over the years, they revolutionized the way they educate their people.

Sibal is a good, intelligent and committed man, but he has inherited a ghastly mess and is surrounded by the architects, managers and perpetrators of that mess. The good news is that he is listening to some of the voices of progress. It is a tiny start.

Having only 30% of our population spending their full childhood in school is a disgrace and costs the country a lot. In the long run, change would pay for itself. Unfortunately for us, most politicians are not in it for the long run. Let us hope that Sibal is.

Source: New Delhi /livemint.com/1st July, 2009

No law to deal with capitation fee menace:Minister

The government on Thursday admitted that it is aware of private educational institutions charging hefty capitation fees, but said there is no specific legislation to deal with the issue.

"There is no legislation to specifically deal with the issue of educational institutions charging hefty capitation fees. But this issue needs to be debated," Minister for Overseas Indian Affairs Vyalar Ravi said while replying to supplementary in Rajy a Sabha.

BJP members S S Ahluwalia and Vikram Verma sought to know what steps the government was planning to curb this practice. Mr Ravi told the House that government has approved 15 per cent seats for children of members of Indian diaspora in all the instituti ons/university departments approved by AICTE, offering courses in engineering and technology, architecture and town planning, MBA, MCA and other such disciplines.

The said supernumerary seats over and above the approved intake are reserved for foreign nationals/NRIs and children of workers in Gulf countries. One-third of these 15 per cent supernumerary seats across different disciplines are reserved for the children of Indian workers in Gulf countries.

Mr. Ravi said UGC has issued orders for creation of 15 per cent supernumerary seats for foreign students. One-third of it will be earmarked for children of Indian workers in the Gulf. He, however, said there is no designated nodal agency for allocating s eats to individual institutions. This statement evoked protests from Opposition benches.

Source: New Delhi /the hindubusinessline.com/2nd July, 09

Of education and regulation

India's higher education system, with a large population leading to mass enrolment, should ideally support a diverse and decentralized system

The Yash Pal committee on renovation and rejuvenation of higher education submitted its report recently. The committee has given several useful suggestions that could have far-reaching consequences. Yet, the report misses out on one vital point: the diversity in provision of higher education.

The 2009 World Conference on Higher Education, held by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization this month, identified diversification as the second most important dynamic at work in higher education. Spawned by rising demand, globalization and new information technologies, more complex and competitive systems of higher education are emerging. These would have a variety of institutions, education providers and approaches. However, the need for a diverse system is not adequately understood in India.

At the time of Independence, with a small number of universities and colleges offering degrees in a limited range of subjects, it was possible to assume that all universities in India were equally good; hence, it was possible to fund and treat them equally. Today, there are more universities, a larger body of students and a greater diversity of subjects. In such a scenario, different institutions would serve different purposes. Hence, they would need to be funded and treated differently.

There are two distinct models of higher education. First, the Anglo-American model, which sees the higher education provision as heterogeneous, encourages diversity. Second, the Scandinavian model which, based on the assumption that the institutions are homogeneous, treats them equally and regards all programmes as equal.

India's higher education system, with a large population leading to mass enrolment, should ideally support a diverse and decentralized system. A robust system would align itself with the nation's social diversity and the more complex division of labour in the economy today.

Currently, the Indian system is highly centralized and driven by an unrealistic myth of uniformity and a commitment to egalitarianism. It is believed that inequality in the quality of institutions would create class-related differences, with well-off students attending better institutions and thus getting an easier access to social and economic opportunities. No wonder, then, that the government often pursues policies that ensure equalizing quality, but which only drive everyone to the lowest level.

The Yash Pal committee has recommended the creation of an all-encompassing national commission for higher education and research (NCHER) to regulate quality standards in all branches of higher education. This would be a constitutional body free of political intrusions, replacing the current regime of multiple regulators saddled with their dysfunctional inspection-based regulatory arrangements. According to the report, the new commission would be the super-regulator and the main funding body for higher education. But it remains doubtful if such a superstructure can govern a complex and increasingly diverse system.

However, careful design of structure and instruments of regulation could create the desired regulatory system. Such a system would rely more on peers than the government, with accreditation bodies and agencies responsible for maintaining standards. The regulator would be confined to a validating role.

NCHER could provide an over-arching framework for coordinating standards. Unnecessary regulations should be terminated and only a minimum set of regulatory concerns need to be addressed. The new regulator's role should be more sensitive and less intrusive than what the multiple regulators do currently.

The country needs a regulatory environment that encourages diversity and quality comparisons between institutions—not one that centralizes authority or enforces dead uniformity.

Source: New Delhi /livemint.com/14th July, 2009

Sahaj and IGNOU take quality education to villages

Srei Sahaj e-Village, a subsidiary of Srei Infrastructure has partnered with Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) to offer distance learning programmes in villages, with an aim to take

international quality education at affordable costs for the rural India.

Commenting on the collaboration, Hemant Kanoria, Chairman and Managing Director, Srei said "As acquiring higher degrees is directly related to greater socio-economic status, this is a powerful step towards making the growth and development of India broad-based and accessible by the hitherto, remote, marginalized and disadvantaged communities."

Higher education would be made available to the villagers through 27,000 Common Service Centres (CSCs), which are set up in the states of West Bengal, Bihar, Assam, Uttar Pradesh, Orissa, Tamil Nadu and Jammu & Kashmir. All courses will be accredited to IGNOU. Srei Sahaj will administer the programmes including enrollments, registration, fee collection, evaluation and will also do the certification online or manually.

Presently, there is a huge gap in the educational status of boys and girls within the rural sphere of the country, as against the urban youth. The net enrollment ratio of the rural youth stands at a mere 7.48 percent for boys and 4.5 percent for girls, which is remarkably lower than 17.84 percent and 16.9 percent respectively for urban boys and girls.

However, with the use of modern ICT platform of Sahaj available at 12,000 Gram Panchayat units, the prestigious IGNOU higher education will be made available to the rural youth in digital format at the Sahaj Common Service Centers (CSCs). The rural youth would have unprecedented prospects to acquire IGNOU's internationally recognized certification, diplomas, degrees right in their village within a distance of three kilometers from their homes at the ICT backed, computerized Sahaj CSCs.

Dr Sabahat Azim, CEO, Srei-Sahaj said, "This is a historical step to bridge the educational gap between the rural and urban India. Now parents, who for their own socio-economic reasons were diffident about sending their wards to pursue higher education can now rest easy". The Sahaj-IGNOU tie up aimed at re-engineering higher education will bring in great advantage to women and those people who cannot afford to travel and live in the cities to pursue their education.

Source: Bangalore /siliconindia.com/9th July, 2009

Superpowers lose ground as balance of power shifts

'Redistribution of brains' on cards as US and UK struggle to cope with the recession,'

A global "redistribution of brains" may take place as academic job security diminishes and the world's education superpowers lose ground to emerging nations as a result of the economic crisis.

This was the scenario outlined at an international higher education conference last week, run by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

Speakers from universities and governments across the world predicted "churn" in the international job market as leading institutions are forced to lay off talented staff and the salaries offered by emerging university systems become more competitive.

Delegates also heard that traditional tenure systems offering "jobs for life" are set to become a thing of the past.

The conference, Higher Education at a Time of Crisis: Challenges and Opportunities saw the presentation of a bleak economic analysis by Sven Blondal, head of the macroeconomic policy division at the OECD.

He said that while the global economic crisis was likely to heap pressure on public spending across the OECD's 30 member nations - putting education spending at risk as a result - some countries would be harder hit than others.

Mr. Blondal said that the US, the UK, Ireland and Spain would have to institute dramatic spending cuts to rein in public debt, adding that they faced a "very, very challenging situation indeed" to consolidate their budgets.

He stated that Canada, France, Germany, Italy and Japan would cope better thanks to their more modest debts, while most of the Nordic countries, as well as Korea and Switzerland, were unlikely to face much retrenchment.

Hosting a round-table discussion, Hans Peter Mollgaard, head of the department of economics at the Copenhagen Business School, Denmark, the site of the conference, said that the US "is in for much more painful reform than others".

He asked: "Will there be a redistribution of brains across the world?"

"Yes," said panellist John Hudzik, vice-president for global engagement at Michigan State University. He acknowledged that the US faced particularly tough times.

"Endowment-giving has been hit first and hit hard - 45 per cent of operations in some cases are supported by endowment funds, and they have suffered huge losses," he said.

This, combined with "two to three decades of disinvestment" in higher education by state governments, plus the fact that tuition-fee levels had hit a price ceiling, meant that the US was likely to lose ground, he added.

Professor Hudzik also suggested that the "relatively rapid development of high-quality higher education systems across the world will create more

employment opportunities for good academics than in the past".

Pointing out the ongoing price competition to attract top scholars, he predicted that the US would "be a net loser in this because competition is widening".

Koen Debackere, professor of managerial economics, strategy and innovation at the Catholic University of Leuven, said it was "plain logic" that job mobility in the academic world would intensify, especially as the US "is in for a more serious time ahead".

"Do not forget Asia in this picture," he added. "Most of the growth potential will be there."

End of the line for tenure track

Tom Boland, chief executive of the Irish Higher Education Authority, said the sector "is very much a global activity and the current crisis will enhance that".

He said there would be more "churning up" of the international university system.

Mr. Boland also predicted that the crisis would diminish traditional academic job security, putting pressure on systems that award tenure. "My sense is that a key development for Ireland emerging from the crisis is the need for greater flexibility in staff contracts," he said. "Inflexible staff structures mean you can't remove underperforming or non-performing staff."

He added that tenure "seems to be very dangerous to the development of higher education" because it is "hostile to the concept of innovation in teaching and learning".

"Some people simply won't perform" and nothing can be done about it, said Mr. Boland, adding: "I'm not in the field of throwing out all protection for people, but there needs to be some rebalancing."

Professor Hudzik predicted that more institutions would engage in "constellation hiring" - appointing one or two big research stars that universities could use to attract other academics.

At the concluding session of the two-day event, Dirk Van Damme, head of the Centre for Education, Research and Innovation at the OECD, said the sector faced "serious challenges in staff policies".

Dr Van Damme said that in light of the economic crisis, senior staff might postpone their retirements, so "some institutions may be obliged to lay off well-qualified staff, often junior and more productive".

He said: "Such staff will enter the academic labour market and will be willing to be very mobile."

He went on to add that "increased competition may push down salaries".

Source: /timeshighereducation.co.uk/9th July, 2009

Ways to govern education

The demands of the education market vary a lot. Some like to have the standards of the IITs; there are others who are quite happy with the sub-standard of poor colleges. How can a central body bring them all under a single roof, asks P. V. INDIRESAN.

The basic problem with Indian education is at the primary stage.

As I said in my previous article, in the field of education, India has three options: The first option of retaining the existing system with suitable reforms to punish offenders is the simplest. Considering that the Indian judicial system is beset with inordinate delays, there is not much hope that recalcitrant colleges will be punished, at any rate fast enough or severely enough to deter them. Therefore, the real choices are only two: Have a new system of regulation or a new system of governance.

Current thinking appears to favour a powerful central authority that will oversee all aspects of education — from the primary school level to the post-graduate.

That choice has its own problems. What is the guarantee that such a body too will not be corrupted the way the UGC and the AICTE have been? Who will man the body?

If the same persons who are handling the UGC and the AICTE were to do so (that is highly probable) will they not carry the old baggage? If, for whatever reason, a wrong choice is made, a megalomaniac or a corrupt or a timid person becomes the chief regulator, will that not damage the entire system?

As we are not clear what the proposed system will be, one cannot be very specific. At the same time, we have to be concerned in instituting a monopoly to control the entire system of education.

Further, what will the regulator do — regulate courses, standards, admissions, fees? How will that help educators have their own autonomy? One wrong or bad choice of regulation can do untold and even irrecoverable damage.

TRAI as analogy

SEBI can be cited as an example of a good regulator which regulates innumerable businesses performing entirely different tasks. However, SEBI does not regulate how a business operates but only its financial system.

For that purpose it has the support of innumerable accounting and auditing firms each one of which has decades of tradition and is regulated by well established laws. At present, we have no equivalent of auditing firms to discipline any educational institution.

The demands of the education market vary a lot. Some like to have the standards of the IITs; there are others who are quite happy with the sub-standard of

poor colleges. How can a central body bring them all under a single roof?

We are witness to the problems faced by the Telecommunication Regulatory Authority of India. Education is probably an even bigger business, and a far more complex one, than telecommunications is. Hence, a cautious administration should be more concerned about what is happening to TRAI than to SEBI.

Apart from a small minority of the very rich, for almost all others, the aim of education is to get better jobs. Unfortunately, the fact is that unemployment among the university graduates is much higher than among the others. In particular, under-employment of graduates is widespread in the country.

The problem starts at the school level: According to a Planning Commission report, most students cannot divide a two-digit number by a single digit, nor can they read a sentence even after several years of education.

Cost of education

The basic problem with Indian education is at the primary stage. That is where most dropouts occur and the best minds are lost. As the Centre has the responsibility to maintain standards, I suggest that the Centre should run or fund at least one institution in every tehsil where even the poorest child will get good education — provided it is among the top ten per cent. That kind of a system will do more to improve education than any regulator can.

Educational institutions may be funded either by the government or privately. Each system has its own problems. In many state-funded institutions, teacher discipline is poor; in many private institutions, admissions are arbitrary and fees can be extortionate.

Most governments have given up on disciplining teachers. Instead, they impose ceilings on fees and, at the same time, insist that teachers be paid properly. The latter is a rule that is bound to be broken. Looking at the issue objectively, there are three beneficiaries of the education system: The student, the employer and the society at large. As a simple rule, we might say that the cost of education should be divided equally among the three. The fees charged may not be the same for every student but students as a whole may contribute a third of the cost and the employers and the state a third each.

Unfortunately, the state is unable to charge students a third of the costs and has no money to spare beyond paying salaries. It is unable to discipline teachers.

It interferes with the system of admissions and has a great propensity for central entrance tests. It forgets that entrance tests cannot, and do not, assess the full potential of a student; that nationwide tests can at best

be used (as the US does) for short-listing and not as the final arbiter of admissions.

Biased view to blame

The current problem in Tamil Nadu medical admissions has risen because the state and the judiciary have a biased view of the rich.

A rich child can enjoy many luxuries including exclusive school education which no poor child can ever hope for. He/she can even go abroad and enjoy an even more expensive education. All that is legal, accepted, and permitted.

However, at the Indian university level, the child cannot go to expensive and exclusive colleges by paying whatever the institution may charge. That is not legal. Suddenly, the rich child loses the freedom it enjoys elsewhere. That is at the root of the problem.

I suggest that private colleges should have the autonomy to decide what courses they will teach and at what standard, admit whoever they like and charge whatever they consider fit from each student but they should do so transparently, not secretly. Let them have the same rules by which Harvard and Stanford discipline themselves.

In the case of state-funded colleges, the state may impose its own policy on admission and on the fees to be charged. However, the state should give up its prerogative to transfer teachers. It is the transfer business that has destroyed most government institutions. If the IITs have done fairly well, that is because their teachers are not transferable.

Ideally, each institution should have its own management committee which will recruit (and promote) its teachers. That is the basic autonomy that state funded colleges need more than anything else.

Charter Schools

The state may also consider the system of "Charter Schools": Schools in the US that receive public money but have been freed from some of the rules, regulations, and statutes that apply to other public schools in exchange for extra accountability.

It is best to leave private institutions alone. Let them prosper or sink according to the quality of education they provide and at the cost they charge. Sooner or later, they will find it necessary to admit more competent but poorer students – even free if that is needed – the way Harvard and other private universities do in the US.

If like the US, India does without a central regulator, what kind of Public-Private Partnership can it have?

Source: Chennai /thehindubusinessline.com/6th July, 2009

What lies beneath?

When two Chennai-based medical colleges were put under the spotlight for charging high capitation fees

(aka donations), a new can of worms opened up. Regardless of the directives of the Supreme Court and the government- these colleges continued to flout laws established to protect students and gave admissions on the basis of donations.

This incident has blown the lid off the day-to-day functioning of 'deemed universities' in India. The human resource ministry has now appointed a committee to probe the functioning of such universities. HRD minister, Kapil Sibal has asked UGC to hold all proposals from institutes seeking to gain deemed university status. As per the UGC website (www.ugc.ac.in), there are 127 deemed universities in India, only 41 of which are government-owned.

How it began

The idea originally, was to recognise centres of excellence by awarding them deemed university status. They were meant to be institutions that were 'deemed-to-be-universities' under Section 3 of the UGC Act of 1956. The concept was first proposed by the Radhakrishnan Commission on University Education in 1948. This proposal was included in the UGC Act to give university status to 'institutions which for historical reasons or for any other circumstances are not universities and yet are doing work of a high standard in a specialised academic field comparable to a university and that granting of a status of a university would enable them to further contribute to the cause of higher education, which would mutually enrich the institution and the university system.'

Following this, the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bangalore, and the Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI) became the first institutions to be granted deemed university status in 1958. Today, the deemed university list includes other well known names such as School of Planning and Architecture (SPA), Jamia Hamdard University, Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, The Energy Research Institute, BITS Pilani and Indian Institute of Foreign Trade, to mention a few. These institutes have, arguably, contributed to the cause of higher education in the country.

A K Sharma, professor and acting director, SPA, while elaborating on the benefits the institute got after getting a deemed university status, said, "When we were established under the Society Act we were awarding diplomas. Our students felt left out. But, when the deemed university status was conferred to SPA that disparity was gone. We received grants from the government; we could join organised groups both nationally and internationally."

Root cause

Sharma, while expressing concern over the proliferation of deemed universities in recent years,

added, "Generally, deemed university status was granted to institutes who had proven their excellence.

However, over the years, the manner in which deemed university status was conferred has led one to believe that not much academic thinking has gone into it." The UGC introduced "De novo" clause, to confer deemed university status on institutes delivering academic programmes in emerging areas, subject to revision after five years.

The privilege of being accorded deemed university status was abused in the absence of any strict regulatory mechanism by players who started using the term loosely. To make matters worse, in 2006, UGC issued a notification under which it was no longer necessary for deemed universities to use the adjective 'deemed.' It mandated that such universities must distinguish themselves by writing below their names, in parentheses, 'University established under Section 3 of the UGC Act.' This fine print, however, eluded students who took these institutions at face value — a university like any other.

The report of the 'Committee to Advise on Renovation and Rejuvenation of Higher Education' headed by Yashpal, mentions how some deemed universities in India have been established without any educational purpose and only end up 'deluding students.' It also states that the sudden spurt in the number of newlyestablished educational institutions as deemed universities is an area of great concern.

The downfall

As per the report, in the first 10 years after the enactment of the UGC Act, eight institutions were granted deemed university status. In the 1970s, UGC decided that notification under Section 3 should be made only in special cases and three institutions were given the privilege. There was a slight shift in the policy in the 1980s and 18 more institutions were added under Section 3. So, between 1956 and 1990 (in 35 years), only 29 institutions were granted the deemed university status.

In Tamil Nadu alone, the number of private deemed universities has increased from 18 in 2007 to 35 in 2008. Further, according to Yashpal's report, even though deemed universities do not have affiliating powers, many of them have extended affiliations across the country. Many of them openly highlight their affiliations to deemed universities, despite such affiliations being 'illegal.' Deemed universities, however, are allowed to have a 'constituent unit' with prior permission of UGC. But, even UGC agrees that there is very thin line separating constituent units from affiliated colleges.

Apart from this, some deemed universities are also involved in setting up additional campuses and study centres without prior approval of UGC. A circular

issued by UGC's secretary, R K Chauhan, mentioned, "It has come to our notice that some deemed universities are opening additional campuses and study centres without the prior approval of UGC and MHRD. Also, in some cases, after submission of the proposal for new campuses, the deemed university started admitting students in these centres without waiting for the final approval."

Word of advice

The circular advises students not to take admission in such study centres. It reads: 'such centres, established and maintained by deemed universities, are only meant for advising, counselling or for rendering any other assistance required by students used in the context of distance education. No student should be admitted to these centres.'

Although it would be incorrect to say that all deemed universities are to blame, the recent incident has shown how some of them are involved in dubious activities. This includes charging capitation fees, opening off-campus institutes and offering degrees through franchising mode, which is illegal in India. So, students seeking admission to institutions awarded deemed university status only recently should exercise caution and are advised to check all the deemed university's particulars on the UGC website before making their decision. The HRD minister has directed UGC to review the functioning of all 'deemed-to-be-universities' and report findings within the next three months.

Source: Chennai /timesofindia.indiatimes.com/6th July, 2009

RESOURCE

Financing your overseas education

There are certain institutions in India which offer scholarships to our students for their study abroad

Only the very rich in India will be able to finance their children's overseas education in full. Higher education in countries like the U.S. and the U.K. is so high-priced that those in the middle or even in the higher income brackets in India cannot meet the expenses by themselves.

They will have to seek support from scholarship providers. There are certain institutions in India which offer scholarships to our students for their study abroad. But the amounts given are usually inadequate to meet the heavy expenses. Many universities have schemes for providing scholarships to international students. Right at the time of applying for admission, you may indicate to the professor or other admitting authority that you may need financial support for undertaking the study.

Of course, students will be able go for part-time jobs subject to the norms of their respective universities.

There would be restrictions in terms of the number of hours of part-time work. Even after getting fellowships or scholarships, you may have to go for bank loans.

The following are some of the sources for scholarships giving support to students for higher studies. You can get detailed information from the web sites, and later get in touch with the organisations for help and assistance.

- Ford Foundation:
  www.fordfound.org/fields/education/overview
- Fulbright: www.iie.org/fulbright
- International Financial Aid: www.iefa.org
- Bill Gates:
  http://www.scholarships.com/gates- millennium-scholar.aspx
- Sallie Mae (Loans): www.salliemae.com
- Commonwealth Scholarship and Marshall: www.acu.ac.uk
- Chevening: www.chevening.com (UK
- scholarship)
- Adobe:
  www.iiesf.org/new/programs/corporate.htm
- Edupass: www.edupass.org/finaid
- Rotary Foundation:
  www.rotary.org/foundation/education/amb_scho
- www.internationalscholarships.com
- www.internationalStudentLoan.com
- www.fundingusstudy.org
- www.grantsnet.org
- www.internationalstudent.com/scholarships
- http://scholarship-positions.com
- Dutch scholarships: www.nuffic.nl/international-students/scholarships
- UK scholarships: www.educationuk.org
- US scholarships:
  www.usastudyguide.com/Financial_aid.htm
- Canadian scholarships:

www.schoolsincanada.com/University-
  Scholarships-For-International-Students.cfm
- Australian scholarship:
  www.australianscholarships.gov.au
- UK undergraduate scholarships:
- www.scholarshipnet.info/undergraduate/uk-international-undergraduate-scholarships
- Singapore scholarships:

www.moe.gov.sg/education/scholarships

* Sports scholarships:

  www.sport-scholarships.com

* French government scholarships:

  www.india-campusfrance.org, www.egide.asso.fr, www.cnous.fr, www.onisep.fr, www.cefi.org, www.fnege.imaginet.fr

* European Union scholarships:

  http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus_mundus/funding/scholarships_students_academics_en.php

* Rhodes scholarship: www.rhodesscholarships-india.com (Higher studies in Oxford)

* Gates Cambridge scholarship:

  www.gatesscholar.org (Higher studies in Cambridge)

* External scholarships arranged by the Department of Higher Education, Government of India, in countries such as China, Korea, Israel, Japan, Czech, Slovak, New Zealand, Commonwealth countries, Belgium, Italy, Mexico, Norway, and Turkey: www.education.nic.in

You should remember that investment in appropriate higher education is perhaps the best form of investment.

Where do you start?

In the early part of this series, we had described the formalities of 'Statement of Purpose' and 'Letters of Recommendation'. Later on we discussed the need of qualifications acquired through tests such as GRE, GMAT, TOEFL, and IELTS.

You should have a clear picture as to how you should proceed to secure admission in a foreign university. You have to be prompt and punctual in responding to the professors or other admitting authorities overseas. You will find that professors in the U.S. and many other countries respond to you through email promptly. You may be trying to secure admission not in one university, but half a dozen of them simultaneously. You should maintain separate files or directories for each. The information you give should be precise, accurate, and comprehensive. Provide as much relevant information as possible to the professor or other admitting authorities, enabling them to make a well-informed decision in your favour.

In case of doubt, seek advice with regard to the information required by the university. There should not be any occasion when you have to send a correction. The application material would be almost the same for all the universities in your favoured list. But there may have to be some differences. That is why you should pay particular attention in each piece

of correspondence. Also, you should ensure that you send your application sufficiently in advance, so that it receives necessary attention before the seats are filled up.

Your certificates, examination scores, statement of purpose, and the letters of recommendation will paint your picture before the admitting authorities. They may sometimes speak to you over telephone. If you are being considered for a research degree like Ph.D., you may be called up for a face-to-face interview. Also, if you are in the country where the university is located, you may be asked to go for a direct interview. In any case, the object of a pre-admission interview is to check and confirm the following things:

* Claims in the application material you have furnished
* Ability for grasping complex ideas
* Analytical thinking ability
* Ability for independent work
* Ability to undergo the program successfully
* Knowledge level in the subject of study
* Suitability for the programme
* Passion for the subject
* Ability for application of knowledge in a new situation
* Ability for innovation
* Aptitude for research
* Language skills
* Commitment and dedication
* Interests in co-curricular activities
* Self-confidence

All these aspects may not be relevant in every case. You should necessarily be able to furnish a convincing answer to the question as to why you go for the particular university/institution, and the particular subject.

Source: /hindu.com/7th July, 2009

Opportunities beckon engineering students

Eighty per cent of Indians don't have bank accounts, 50 per cent of Indians don't have access to primary health care, 50 per cent of food distributed by the government for public doesn't reach the targeted groups and the country faces a shortage of nearly three lakh teachers.

These are facts, yet have lot more significance than mere statistics mentioned at the routine government meetings suggest.

Academics and industry heads see tremendous employment opportunities in these facts and want the

engineering students to turn these challenges into opportunities instead of cribbing over recession that has hit the IT sector.

Professionals from the industry and academics shared these views at an Industry Academia meet on "Employment Opportunities, impact of recession on students, and how to overcome it," organised jointly by JNTU Hyderabad, Nasscom and Globarena in Hyderabad.

The experts were unanimous in their opinion that recession is a temporary phenomenon and it has to be fought with improved skills, performance and productivity.

Even in this recession period, more than 60 per cent of companies are growing in India and less than 13 per cent are considering retrenchment. If IT industry is hit, banking industry is on a high with commercial banks earning Rs. 36,500 crores combined net profit, which is more than 25 per cent than previous year. "Job seekers have to look at such fields." However, there was a word of caution for engineering graduates.

Even if recession is over, not everyone would be absorbed and there will be a majority who has to search for newer avenues. And there are many other avenues available that unfortunately engineering graduates are unaware of.

An expert team constituted by the Planning Commission of India has identified 30 such fields other than IT where employment opportunities are abundant and students need to explore these areas for better future.

Source: Hyderabad /hindu.com/7th July, 2009

GLOBAL: Higher Education in the future

The enormous challenge facing global higher education in the next decade is the uneven distribution of human capital and funds, which will allow some nations to take full advantage of new opportunities while others drift further and further behind. This is one of several future trends predicted by a report for the UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education. It says accelerating change is presenting more complex problems with each passing decade.

Unstoppable globalisation will oblige institutions to rethink traditional degree programmes and past pedagogies, so as to prepare increasingly diverse student cohorts for a borderless economy, says *Trends in Global Higher Education: Tracking an academic revolution.*

"'Talk and chalk' is far from adequate as we move further into the 21st Century," write Philip G Altbach, Liz Reisberg and Laura E Rumbley of the Center for International Higher Education at Boston College in the US, who UNESCO commissioned to write the report.

In the concluding chapter, "Future Trends", they point out that current trends - massification, rapid globalisation, impacts of technology, and movement of students and scholars, programmes and institutions across borders - will continue. The future will be shaped by shifting demographics, technological breakthroughs, and international political and economic forces. But it is possible to identify emerging trends.

Changing enrolments

Expansion higher education has continued at "a staggering rate" - from 51,160,000 tertiary students in 1980 to nearly 140 million in 2006: demand will continue to grow but will come from separate sectors in different countries, write Altbach, Reisberg and Rumbley. New growth will be in the developing world - especially in China and India.

Developed countries appear to have largely achieved universal access and some - Japan, the Republic of Korea and Finland - have enrolment ratios nearing 80%. Mass higher education has opened access to previously excluded populations, and gender inequality has been erased in most countries.

But in some European and East Asian countries there have been declining enrolments among the traditional age cohort while demand has grown among non-traditional students. "Systems and institutions will need to adjust to these new and, in many ways, unprecedented realities."

Also, expansion has not solved persistent social inequalities. Students from minorities, rural areas, older students and the disabled are under-represented. "Modern societies are increasingly concerned with greater access for these population groups," says the report.

From access to completion

It is now recognised that higher education has not become more inclusive or accessible if large proportions of 'new' students fail. In future, the authors point out, "institutions will be measured by their success at supporting students through to completion, not by simply getting more students through the door. This new perspective implies changes, and not only in how institutions measure success - reputations and budgetary allocations will also be affected.

The meaning of 'completion' has also changed. Achievement has been measured by credits, academic performance and qualifications awarded. Now universities must be accountable for what and how students learn. There will be rising concern about the nexus of issues around achievement and learning. "Initiatives like the Bologna process will test new

measures that will undoubtedly have significant influence on future trends."

Diversification

Mass enrolment created the need for diversified systems - hierarchies of institutions serving different needs and constituencies. In future the private sector will be an important aspect of diversification. It will continue to expand in many nations, because public institutions will not keep up with student demand.

Some private institutions might emerge as semi-elite or elite research universities, but care must be taken to ensure that private, especially for-profit, institutions maintain standards and serve society, write Altbach, Reisberg and Rumbley. "New technologies and new providers have only just begun to diversify opportunities. This trend will most certainly continue."

Privatisation and funding

Public higher education has begun to 'privatise' and this will continue. Neo-liberal attitudes, limited public funding, increasing costs and the needs to meet expanded social expectations and build better management systems, among other things, will oblige public institutions to generate income from other sources including research, consulting and university-industry partnerships. This will impact on the nature of institutions.

"Tuition and other fees charged to students will increase and become more ubiquitous worldwide," says the report. "One of the many challenges ahead will be to ascertain that cost does not become a barrier to access when students have the intellectual capacity to study but not the private financial means."

New technologies

The profound impacts of information and communications technology on higher education worldwide are already being seen in, for instance, the rapid communication of knowledge and expansion of distance education, and electronic publication of journals and books. Teaching and learning will be transformed within universities and through distance education.

ICTs will probably not dramatically improve access, as people with limited resources in developing nations are likely to remain distant from necessary infrastructure and equipment for some time.

Concern for quality

Quality assurance will continue to be a high priority. The trend, driven by international mobility of students and scholars, is towards internationally-referenced standards and mutual recognition. "The Bologna process is guiding Europe toward shared benchmarks and standards that will make it possible to compare qualifications awarded in all participating countries." But aspects of measuring and monitoring quality

remain problematic, write Altbach, Reisberg and Rumbley, and a mechanism needs to be found for certifying and integrating national quality assurance schemes on an international level.

Struggle for the soul of higher education

The 'commercialisation' of higher education has placed strain on its social mission. "The debate concerning the primary mission and priorities of higher education will continue," the report says. Countries will be challenged to balance local needs and priorities with standards, practices and expectations articulated at the international level."

Management and leadership

As higher education has become larger and more central to society and individuals, there has been a growing need for professional management and leadership. Training, think tanks and policy forums are emerging, and institutions and systems are collecting data about themselves for use in policy-making and improvement. "The higher education enterprise is simply too large, complex and central to be managed without data and professionalism."

Conclusion

What has become increasingly apparent, the report concludes, is that higher education trends are inter-related. "Trying to examine these trends separately is similar to trying to pull an individual string from a knotted mass - tugging one brings along several others."

Source: /universityworldnews.com/5th July, 2009

Obstacles on road to world class universities

'World class' status for universities could take years to achieve, cost a large amount of money - and still fall short of the social and economic rewards commonly associated with top brand name institutions, according to a report launched at UNESCO's World Conference on Higher Education.

Spurred on by a proliferation of international league tables of top universities, many countries are intent of creating world class universities. However, many of them are "chasing a myth", says *Challenge of Establishing World Class Universities*, produced by the World Bank.

"There is no universal recipe or magic formula for making a world class university but nonetheless one cardinal rule seems to be that money alone will not buy you a coveted spot on the annual list of the world's elite institutions," said Jamil Salmi, author of the report.

"Many institutions believe that throwing money at the problem and having a beautiful campus will get them there," he told a media briefing in Paris on Monday.

However "most countries could have at best just one or two world class institutions.

"Even in a global knowledge economy where all industrial and developing countries are competing for a bigger slice of the economic pie, the hype surrounding world class institutions far exceeds the educational needs and research potential of many of these same countries."

World class status is not achieved by self-declaration either, the report notes. Rather, elite status is conferred by the outside world on the basis of international recognition.

Most universities regarded as world class are in a very small number of countries, with almost all in the top 20 ranking produced by Shanghai Jiao Tong University located in the US or Britain. "For developing countries with world class university aspirations, this is a stark reminder of the challenges they face achieving the goal," the report points out.

Most developing nations cannot hope to match the resources of the richest countries. But Salmi said it should not only be the richest countries who have world class institutions. He pointed to the example of the International Institute for Water and Environment Management in Burkina Faso, which is aspiring to be one of the best institutions in the world for training engineers in water and environment management.

Salmi said elite international universities had a high concentration of talented teachers and students, significant budgets, and strategic vision and leadership.

"In most cases world class universities have students and faculty who are not exclusively from the country where the university operates. This enables them to attract the most talented people, no matter where they come from, and open themselves to new ideas and approaches," the report says. The universities of Cambridge in Britain and Harvard in the US have around 18% of their students and a third of their faculty from other countries.

International students and staff are also features of "newer world class universities" such as the National University of Singapore and Tsinghua University in China.

Universities that rely mainly on their own undergraduates to continue into postgraduate programmes or hire their own graduates to teach at the university "are not likely to be at the leading edge of intellectual development," says the report.

It is also difficult to select the best students in institutions with rapidly growing student enrolments and fairly open admission policies.

The huge size of leading Latin American Universities such as Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico,

with 190,400 students, and the University of Buenos Aires with almost 280,000 students "is certainly a major factor in explaining why these universities have failed to enter the top league despite having a few excellent departments and research centres that are undoubtedly world class."

Salmi argued that many countries would be better off if they focused initially on developing the best national universities possible, and suggested using top US universities or polytechnic universities in Germany and Canada as a model.

Another strategy is to upgrade a small number of existing universities with the potential to excel. This has been the case in China where two top universities - Tsinghua and Beijing - have been accorded special privileges, allowing them to pick the best students before other universities can make a choice.

Merging universities to create centres of excellence has been a policy in Denmark, France and the Russian Federation.

Other countries have set up completely new institutions, such as the Paris School of Economics. However, countries building and operating world class universities from scratch can end up spending significant sums.

In 2007 Saudi Arabia announced plans for a new US$3 billion graduate Research University and Pakistan plans to spend US$750 million on each of its universities of engineering, science and technology to be build in the next few years.

But spending such sums in the hope of creating world class institutions might not be the best policy. "The real challenge is to create excellence from day one," said Salmi.

Source: Paris /universityworldnews.com/12th July, 2009

Contribute

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

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

Please email your contributions to aserf@apeejay.edu

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