APEEJAY STYA EDUCATION RESEARCH FOUNDATION

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Announcements

ASERF has instituted **Dr Stya Paul Young Educationist Award**' for honouring Young Educationists who have demonstrated their potential by making an impact on Indian education.

Applications from the eligible scholars are invited for the Award of the year 2010. 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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ASPECT

The Great Indian Technolution

When India became independent, the political leadership — like the people at large — had magnificent dreams. They wanted to build a prosperous, modern India casting aside centuries of stagnation, poverty and backwardness. And one of the important facets of this vision was the harnessing of science and technology to deal with the huge economic and social challenges facing the country. In the early years the foundation for a gigantic, state-funded scientific establishment was laid. Scientific research in the non-strategic sphere was entrusted to the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) with its 37 laboratories and over 12,000 scientists. Similarly, the Indian Council for Agricultural Research took on the task of addressing problems of increasing agricultural output through its 97 institutes and 45 agricultural universities.

India was a poor country, ravaged and plundered by colonialism. Yet, precious resources were set aside for all this because there was a vision that science should be put to direct use of society. These investments made 60 years ago have since borne fruit. Unlike any other post-colonial country (barring China) India can boast of one of the world's largest scientific establishments with personnel to match it. How have these capabilities been put to use? How has the science and technology establishment tackled the challenges?

The answers to these questions are not easy because it's a mixed bag — there are some well-known crowning achievements, but there is also a growing sense of unease about some issues where problems are mounting.

Five areas can immediately be identified where Indian scientists have made significant strides. Their significance is not that they are fantastic discoveries that changed the world. They are remarkable because they were achieved against all odds, often in international isolation, and working with limited resources. Progress in all these areas has had a cascading effect on other sciences, and on the life of the nation.

Agriculture: 60 years ago, India was referred to as a country leading a ship to mouth existence — foreign food-grain came by ships to feed millions. By 1966, food imports had reached 10 million tonnes. But by 1968, food-grain production shot up by 8 million tonnes and by 1974 India became self-sufficient. Indian agricultural scientists first hybridized Japanese rice varieties with Indian varieties. Then, wheat, maize and various millet varieties were developed. "This is the power of synergy between technology and public policy," explains M S Swaminathan, considered the father of this Green Revolution. Striking progress has also been achieved in the improvement of productivity of farm animals and fish. Today, we occupy the first position in the world in milk production.

Horticulture, which was a pleasantry before independence, has emerged as a core sector in agriculture, says H P Singh deputy director general for horticulture in the Indian Council for Agricultural Research. Research has resulted in conservation of 72,000 accessions and development of 1,500 high yielding cultivators, resulting in India emerging as the second largest producer of fruits and vegetables in the world.

"More than 50% increase in production was recorded between 1991-92 and 1998-99," Singh told TOI.

Progress has continued steadily, but during the last 15 years there has been relative stagnation in the improvement of both crop production and productivity due to ecological and economic reasons, says Swaminathan.

Conversion of scientific know-how into field level 'do-how' and a mismatch between public policy and the needs of technological diffusion are two major problems, he says. "Agricultural policy-making is largely in the hands of general administrators, many of whom have little knowledge of farming and farmers. This is a self-inflicted injury which is hampering progress," he rues.

Nuclear Science: Just three years after Hiroshima, and just an year after Independence, Nehru set up the Atomic Energy Commission, headed by Homi Bhaba — a rare nuclear scientist of international repute from the third world. Under Bhaba, India's nuclear programme blossomed into a formidable force — and on its own steam, for nuclear technologies were not revealed by the dominant powers. By the time he died in a plane crash on Mont Blanc in Europe in 1966, India already had research reactors and uranium was being mined and prepared for use as fuel. Other peaceful uses like use of isotopes for radiation had also been developed. India tested its first nuclear device in 1974, inviting a complete halt in cooperation from the world's nuclear powers. The long process of developing a three-stage process for using thorium fuel, of which India has the world's largest reserves, was initiated under these conditions and continues today. In fact, today, India has 17 atomic power stations while six more are under construction, and is acknowledged as a nuclear power in the world.

The one factor that contributed to this success story is the emphasis Dr Bhabha placed on human resource, says top nuclear scientist V S Ramamurthy, director, National Institute of Advanced Studies and former secretary of the department of science and technology. "In the coming decades, human resource is going to be the biggest challenge in this sector, not only for India but for the entire world, he told TOI.

Space: The department of space grew out of — strangely — the atomic energy department. It was led by Vikram Sarabhai, another of the ilk of Bhaba and encouraged by the political leadership. Within 6 years of the setting up of Indian Space Research Organisation (Isro) in 1969, the first Indian satellite, Aryabhatta, was launched. Since then the Indian space programme has made rapid advances — India has the largest constellation of non-military satellites in the world, serving needs such as communications, broadcasting, tele-education, meteorological data,

environmental monitoring, geology, agriculture, bio-diversity, land use, coastal zone management and ocean resources, urban management and disaster management. It has the capability of launching upto 10 satellites simultaneously and is well on its way to developing vehicles that can be reused after launch. Only recently, Chandrayaan 1 made history by reaching & observing the

Moon: According to K Kasturirangan, former head of ISRO and a member of the Planning Commission, India's space programme is unique "for its direct relevance to national development and, at the same time, being cost-effective". Most of the technology is indigenous, developed in the face of denial regimes, inadequate industrial infrastructure and complex engineering issues. "Our own engineers took this as a challenge and developed many unique solutions through interesting innovations and creativity", Kasturirangan told TOI.

Genomics: India has made spectacular progress in the field of sequencing genetic codes and its applications for disease control. Technological advances in the West made it possible to start full sequencing around the mid-1980's. After initial hesitation, India joined the race to develop capabilities to do complete gene sequencing, largely due to the efforts of S K Brahmachari, who currently heads CSIR. He had worked with Charles Cantor the pioneering geneticist in the early days as a student, and persuaded the Indian government to start work here. "India has distinct advantages for this work — a large population with considerable variation in genetic composition, a fast developing IT capability and a large scientific infrastructure," he told TOI. After setting up the Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology in 1998, Brahmachari led the scientists to pioneering studies on variations in Indian genetic composition. Recently the full genome of an Indian has been mapped, putting India in an exclusive club of eight nations in the world.

Information Technology: This is the most recent and perhaps the most well-known of success stories, with super-computing abilities, a huge pool of trained IT manpower and top scientists in the world's most advanced IT companies. India has emerged as a hub for software services with the industry exporting over $5.7 billion in 2008 and expected to double by 2013. This achievement is different from others in the sense that it has largely been under private sector and largely export-oriented.

One of the biggest changes in global science that India missed out on is materials science and technology, according to C N R Rao, chairman of the scientific advisory committee to the prime minister.

''India did not contribute anything to the semi-conductor revolution and in fact, we hardly have laboratories working on microelectronics. We have very few foundries to make chips. India still depends on chips made elsewhere," he candidly explained to TOI. Although now some attention is being paid to nanotechnology, India needs to invest much more in material sciences, he says. There are various other fields of science in which progress has been steady if not dramatic. A K Sahni, professor emeritus in geology at Panjab University borrows a metaphor from the science itself, to explain this: "The achievements are more like a rising mountain chain with only a few discernible peaks". There have been sharp insights into earth processes, changes in water systems, the dynamics of earthquakes and tsunamis with a early warning system in place, polar studies and alternative energy resources such as coal bed methane and gas hydrates, he says.

The science of weather prediction holds great importance for India as more than half the country's farming is dependent on the monsoon. While there has been rapid progress worldwide due to explosive growth in computing power, development of new observational platforms (satellites, radars, wind profilers, automatic weather stations, ocean buoys and many more), and enhanced understanding of underlying physical processes, progress in India has been slow according to A K Bohra, Head, National Centre for Medium Range Weather Forecasting (NCMRWF). "Till recently, the traditional method of forecasting weather, known as synoptic method was used while the world has moved on to Numerical Weather Prediction (NWP) which uses very complex numerical models," he told TOI. Bohra rues the "lack of adequate computing power and skilled manpower in the country" but is enthusiastic of a recently launched modernization drive.

In the health sector, control of diseases and doubling of life expectancy are major achievements, according to V M Katoch, director general, ICMR. "Several leads for designing the present regimens for tuberculosis, leprosy & other diseases came from India," he told TOI. However, little of this output from medical research has been translated into products/process. This has been due to lack of synergy among different science departments and regulatory agencies, he said.

''The real challenge will be development of health system so that the technology reaches people," he said.

A common problem across virtually all science disciplines is of dwindling human resources. From geology and climatology to nanotechnology and biotechnology, the enrollment of students at graduate and post-graduate levels is stagnating, or even falling. In research output, India produces less than 2% of the world's scientific papers and has a low citation ranking. Investment in R&D has been languishing at about 1% of GDP for several years after rising from 0.16% in 1958.

Prof. Ramamurthy points to two chief weaknesses — the translation of scientific knowledge base into technologies and marketable products and services, and the weak ecosystem for entrepreneurship and venture financing. But he is optimistic. 'The Indian system is indeed waking up to these realities. The increasing investments in higher education, the increasing participation of industries in R&D point to this welcome development. If India can do it in sectors like space, atomic energy in spite of international embargos, it can do it in every other sector," he says.

Source: /timesofindia/23 January 2010

NEWS

Kapil Sibal plans to abolish deemed universities

The concept of deemed universities will be abolished in India, Human Resource Development Minister Kapil Sibal said Tuesday, a day after the central government filed an affidavit in the Supreme Court stating that 44 such institutions would be derecognised.

An institute that goes under the name of the National Museum, Institute of the History of Art, Conservation and Museology and claims to have 135 students including 27 researchers, is among 44 deemed-to-be universities across the country that the government plans to close.

The institutes recommended for derecognition have 1,19,363 students at the under-graduate and post-graduate levels in addition to 2,124 pursuing research in M.Phil and Ph.D programmes. An estimated 74,808 pursue distance education programmes.

44 institutes found deficient

In an 11-page affidavit filed before the Supreme Court on Monday, the Ministry of Human Resource and Development, represented by Solicitor General Gopal Subramanium, stated that all 44 institutes had been recommended for closure.

The recommendation has come from a review committee of experts led by Professor P N Tandon, formerly of the AIIMS and an ex-president of the Indian National Science Academy. The panel had been created in June 2009.

The objective of the committee was to "review functioning of the existing deemed to be universities, and ensure that standards of higher education and research are maintained by such institutions as to justify their continuance as deemed to be universities".

The panel invited all 130 deemed-to be universities for "face to face discussions" during August-September 2009.

Of the 130 invited, 126 attended the sessions, stated Upamanyu Basu, Director, HRD Ministry in the affidavit.

The committee report divides the status of 126 institutes into three categories. The work of the last category of 44 institutes was termed "neither on past performance nor on their promise for the future have they attributed to retain their status as deemed to be universities".

The panel said 38 institutes justify with their achievements, performance and potential to continue as deemed universities while 44 were found to be "deficient in some aspects which need to be rectified over a three-year period suggested by the committee".

Another 44 were recommended for derecognition. Tamil Nadu tops this list with 16, including one sponsored by the government. Karnataka follows with six and Uttar Pradesh is at No. 3 with four.Haryana, Maharashtra, Uttarakhand and Rajasthan have three each while Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Orissa, Puducherry, Bihar and Delhi have one each which will be closed.

Three government-sponsored institutes recommended for closure are the Nava Nalanda Mahavira in Bihar, which has 525 students including 35 Ph.D scholars, Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development at Sriperumbudur in Tamil Nadu with 61 postgraduate students and the one at Janpath, New Delhi.

"The institutions which have been recommended for non-continuation as deemed to be universities together with their constituent units are located in 13 states/union territories and are located within the geographical and academic domain of 28 state universities," Basu said in his affidavit.

Aberrations found in the functioning of the 44 institutes are "undesirable management architecture" of families rather than professionals running them; violation of principles and guidelines of excellence in teaching and research or innovations and "engaged in thoughtless introduction of unrelated programmes and proliferation of degrees"; very little evidence of noticeable efforts in regard to emerging areas of knowledge; "little evidence of commitment" towards research or ability to draw institutional or principal investigator-based research funding on competitive terms, UG and PG level programmes "fragmented" with "concocted nomenclatures", abuse of freedom and flexibility in matters of admission and fee structure.

"Many institutions which attained deemed university status from being a college increased their intake capacity disproportionately and in some cases exponentially in relation to the qualified faculty strength and other academic infrastructure," the affidavit stated.

A Task Force is preparing a plan to "safeguard" interests of students enrolled in the institutes "whose declaration is revoked in public interest and is accordingly required to cease operations as a deemed to be university", the affidavit stated.

The below-par institutions will be required to revert to their status as an "affiliated college" of the statutory state university or state medical or dental universities concerned so that students would be able to complete ongoing courses and obtain degrees from the affiliating universities, the affidavit stated.

"The Central government is determined to take appropriate steps for securing the future of students enrolled in the 44 institutions in accordance with the recommendations of the Task Force," Basu said in the affidavit. "The government is committed to ensure that the standards of higher education is not lowered through the continuation of any institutions as a deemed to be university as is not found to have either performance or potential to retain the status of a university," the affidavit said.

The government said it was still waiting for draft regulations of the UGC for declaration of institutions as deemed to-be universities. The government said it was in the process of finalising a legislative proposal for regulating the entry and operations of foreign education providers in India. The proposal, the Ministry said, will be introduced in Parliament after obtaining necessary approvals.

Source: New Delhi /news.in.msn/19 January 2010

After hiccups, education reform bills cleared

Notwithstanding the initial hiccups, HRD ministry's two major Bills that promise to change the face of higher education -- accreditation of higher educational institutions and setting up of educational tribunals -- were cleared by the Group of Ministers with minor changes in the very first meeting on Thursday.

The third Bill that seeks to check educational malpractices will be taken up in the next meeting since defence minister AK Antony could not be present on Thursday.

The minor changes relate to the number of appeals that an aggrieved party can make in case of educational tribunals. In case of accreditation agency, it has been resolved that educational agencies under various ministries including HRD will be brought under it. "By and large, nothing much has changed. Jurisdictionally both the Bills remain the same," sources said.

A senior official said the ministry expects to table the two Bills in the budget session of Parliament and expects them to become law by the monsoon session. "We hope the reforms will be on track," he said, adding that ministry will soon go to the Cabinet after incorporating the minor changes.

HRD's reform in case of accreditation seeks to end the monopoly of government-run accreditation agencies for institutions of higher education. Under the proposed law, accreditation will be opened for multiple accreditation agencies, mostly private, with their action being monitored by a regulator. The regulator -- National Authority for Regulation in Accreditation of Higher Educational Institutions -- will be a five-member body on the lines of Sebi, and will register accreditation agencies.

The Bill envisages that once these members demit office after their five-year term they would not be eligible for further employment in any higher educational institution promoted by the Central or state government.

Accreditation agencies will accredit institutions on a host of outcomes like teaching, learning and research, human resource and research infrastructure, placement, governance structures and course curricula. Every institution will have to get accredited and make public how it has been rated by the agency.

The educational tribunal Bill envisages a two-tier structure to deal with disputes between students and institutions, teachers and institutions as well as disputes related to affiliation, unfair means adopted by students in examination and by institutions.

It proposes a National Educational Tribunal (NET) at the top. It will have the power to settle any dispute between a higher educational institution and any regulatory body except in matters of recognition. It will also adjudicate any dispute between any two or more statutory regulatory bodies. NET will also adjudicate any dispute related to matters of affiliation between a higher educational institution and the affiliating university, where such a university is a Central Educational Institution. At the state level will be the State Educational Tribunal (SET).

Source: New Delhi /timesofindia/22 January 2010

AICTE's new portal to restrict plagiarism

Plagiarism will not be possible, if All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) has its way, said its acting chairman SS Mantha on Sunday.

Mantha was the chief guest at MSU's 58th convocation, which saw a good number of students, along with their parents, receive their degrees. Gold medals were given out to 223 students after dignitaries addressed the crowd.

Later speaking to TOI, the chief of the apex body of technical education in the country said, a new web portal of AICTE will enable institutes to find out whether the research carried out by its students and teachers is original.

Mantha said the portal will now onwards ask for abstracts of research students and teachers from all engineering colleges to be submitted online. This will not only help collaborative research projects between different educational institutes of the country but also put a check on plagiarism. In addition, it will tap good research ideas and help in translating it into a feasible proposition for real use. "Our new portal will help in both intra and inter transactions and will be classified for teachers and students," he added.

Mantha shared that through this initiative AICTE is trying to resolve problems at the same time creating windows of opportunities for teachers, students and the industry.

"We want to discourage the system of copy and paste and plagiarism. By getting research abstract online, every researcher will come under public domain. This will encourage students as well as faculty members to come up with research propositions, which can be put to use. Most importantly the industry will know about the kind of research taking place across the country," added Mantha.

He also shared that there are two schemes which are introduced by AICTE to promote research and offer opportunity to teachers to guide students from other colleges as well. "We are simplifying the process so that there is free flow of ideas and knowledge among students and teachers across the country. The ultimate aim is to build critical mass of guides, teachers and teachers which will help to reduce faculty crunch," Mantha explained.

Source: Vadodara /timesofindia/24 January 2010

Awareness in Indian Education

"*The sad commentary on our own complexes that we should prefer to graduate from a third rate foreign university to struggling to get degrees here in India".*

There are reports that the UPA government is also considering abolishing the University Grants Commission (UGC) and the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) to establish a single independent regulator according to the recommendations of the Yashpal panel.

That is a major step to take and, for all one knows, it is a wise decision, except that it calls for a valid explanation. The time, certainly, has come for moving fast in upgrading our universities in all fields of educational endeavor.

With the attack on Indian students in Australia making the headlines, an Indian scholar, R Vaidyanathan, Professor of Finance at the Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore, recently raised a very relevant question in the media. According to him, one lakh Indian students are studying at various Australian Universities and the amount they spent in two years on tuition, travel board and lodging comes to around Rs 20,000 crore. If one adds the amount spent by Indian students in other countries, the figures would rise to Rs one lakh crore. What can't India achieve if that amount is spent right here in India to raise the educational standards of our own universities? Not all foreign universities are known for their high standards. As Prof Vaidyanathan put it: "It is a sad commentary on our own complexes that we should prefer to graduate from a third rate foreign university to struggling to get degrees here in India".

The trouble is that Indian universities are not exactly famous for providing quality education. India has the third largest higher education system in the world—after China and the US—with 311 universities and 15,600 colleges as of 2004. India produces 2.5 million graduates and 350,000 engineers every year. India's pool of university graduates, according to N R Narayanamurthy, alone is 1.5 times the size of China and twice as large as that of the US. Is that something to be proud of?

Consider these facts: According to the academic ranking of world universities for 2005, India had just two universities in the top 500 while Japan had 34, China 18, a small nation like South Korea seven and Brazil four. According to a survey report in the Times Higher Education Supplement (October 6, 2006) India had then just two universities in the top 100 and three in the top 200, while just Hong Kong had two universities in the top 50, three in the top 100 and four in the top 200. What does that say about our universities? Not only Hong Kong but China as a whole together are beating India hollow.

According to the Asian University Rankings 2009 published by The Times of India (May 31, 2009) no Indian University made it to the top ten in Asia. At the very top stood the University of Hong Kong. Five of the seven Indian Institutes of Technology and the State Universities of Delhi and Pune came only in the top 100. It is a sad commentary on our higher educational system that, according to a McKinsey Study (known for its high credibility) a typical IIT was granted three to six patents in a year as against sixty four granted to Stanford Engineering College in the US. What a shame!

What is even more shocking is to realize from a McKinsey report that only about 10 per cent of Indian students with degrees in the Arts and Sciences and 25 per cent of engineering graduates are globally competitive. And to think that Indian students have been doing well once they go abroad and work in the Silicon Valley! Are we outsourcing our brains? Does anybody know that overseas Indians hold almost 30,000 patents for every one held by an Indian in India?

Writing in The Hindu (December 9, 2006), three and a half years ago, Ramesh Thakur, senior Vice Rector of the United Nations University and Assistant Secretary General of the United Nations made the point that "India's higher education and research sector is over-regulated and under-funded with professors being burdened with excessive student numbers and teaching to the neglect of quality original research". Tsinhua University in China apparently has 4,600 faculty for 26,500 students, including 5,000 Ph.D graduates. That was said three years ago. Things must have improved still further. Latest information is not available, but from what little we know, our policy makers in the past have had no clear vision of how to handle higher education in India. For that matter, even primary education. It is not that Indians are intellectually low grade. Given the opportunities they can outshine anybody in the world as has been shown time and again. But it is not just opportunities that have to be created: It is important that crores of rupees need to be spent to upgrade the entire educational system. India spend just about 1.9 per cent of the GBP on higher education when the Kothari Commission which submitted its report almost four decades ago, had recommended raising the percentage to six per cent. That recommendation, like so many others, has for long been brushed under the carpet.

According to the Draft Report of the Working Group on Higher Education (11th Five Year Plan), the per student expenditure on higher education has been declining in recent years. At 2006-2007 prices, the per student expenditure was about Rs 17,000 in 1993-1994 whereas it was only Rs 13,000 in 2003-2004, which only shows that students have been continuously deprived of quality education. Presently, according to media reports, the UPA government is taking steps for a course correction in the field of education. A blue-print, apparently, has been evolved at the highest level of decision-making to initiate major reforms in the educational sector. Apparently, foreign universities will be henceforth permitted to set up campuses in India. Instead of students having to go abroad to get their degrees, they could save an enormous amount of money by getting admitted to the branches set up in India by these very universities. That should be a welcome move.

Another wise and long-due decision reportedly taken by the new government is to keep faculty appointments free of reservations. The former Human Resources Development Minister, Arjun Singh, had ordered implementation of the reservation policy in IIT faculty appointments leading to requests by IIT Directors to the Prime Minister not to allow the same. It is pleasant to know that the Directors are being listened to. Again, according to media reports, the reform blueprint has advocated that the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research Laboratories be converted into full-fledged Universities so that Indian students can rise to be on par with students abroad in the matter of patents. There

are reports that the UPA government is also considering abolishing the University Grants Commission (UGC) and the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) to establish a single independent regulator according to the recommendations of the Yashpal panel. That is a major step to take, for all one knows, it is a wise decision, except that it calls for a valid explanation. The time, certainly, has come for moving fast in upgrading our universities in all fields of educational endeavor. There has been too much stagnation in the past than is good for the country.

Source: /apsira/21 January 2010

CBSE class IX evaluation

In the last one year, there have been significant changes in the Indian education sector. One such change includes the introduction and implementation of the Continuous Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) for class IX students by the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE).

According to CCE, the class IX term will be divided into two semesters. For each of the two semesters, respective examinations will be conducted. In this academic session, since more than half of the session has already been completed, schools are required to conduct only the second semester examinations. But starting 2010-2011 session, both semesters will be followed and examinations held. The board will set the papers for the CCE examinations.

With not enough sample papers to follow, teachers and students are not clear about the examination pattern, mode of assessment, and so on. Further, while teachers are confused about how to examine and mark students, students are apprehensive because of the lack of study material provided by CBSE. Though CBSE has recently issued one sample paper (for each subject) for the 2010 class IX exam, it is not enough and students are finding it difficult to comprehend the pattern that is to be followed.

Says Vishvesh Varma, a class IX student from Modern School, Barakhamba Road, "We haven't yet got the date sheet, which is why we are finding it difficult to plan. Further, within a short span of two months (January and February), we are not only expected to complete the formatives and various projects, but also prepare for our summative 2. For this, the board has prescribed the syllabus and has posted sample papers on the internet, but the questions are all application based, which requires thorough revision of the NCERT textbooks. After completing our textbooks for our summative 2 there will be no time left to refer to other books. The lack of exposure to questions of a different format is a cause for concern."

However, educationists feel that CCE is going to be an advantage for students in the long run. Neeta Kapoor, English teacher from Tagore International School, points out, "CCE would reduce the pressure on students and help them move away from rote-learning." Besides, the CCE pattern is more comprehensive and practical in its approach. While on the one hand it is supposed to identify learning progress of students at regular intervals on small portions of content, it also employs remedial measures of teaching based on learning needs and potential of each student. Other components include involving learners actively in the learning process and recognising abilities of students in areas other than academics.

A few publishers like Oswaal Books have launched a series comprising CBSE sample papers along with five 'additional' sample papers. According to the publishers, experienced teachers from CBSE schools across the country have prepared the papers. "The books will assist teachers to carry out formative assessment of students," says Prashant Jain, head (marketing), Oswaal Books.

Source: /timesofindia/25 January 2010

Court notice to Centre, UGC on deemed varsity status

The Supreme Court on Friday issued notice to the Centre and the University Grants Commission on a writ petition seeking to declare illegal the UGC Act provision to grant deemed university status to an educational institution.

In his petition, consumer activist Jitendra Narayan Singh said Section 3 of the University Grants Commission Act, 1956 conferred wide and unguided power on the executive to recognise an institution as a "deemed university," and such action resulted in commercialisation of the system of granting degrees.

In recent years, the executive authority arbitrarily to confer the status on institutions, which "have no standards to be recognised as universities, had exercised the power. These institutions in turn indulge in conferring degrees by making a profit, Mr. Singh told a Bench comprising Chief Justice K.G. Balakrishnan and Justices V.S. Sirpurkar and Deepak Verma.

"The innocent student, after having invested time, money and effort, receives a piece of paper as a degree which has no value or substance. The students ultimately find themselves being robbed of the value for their money paid for services offered by such deemed universities."

As establishment of universities was held to be a legislative act, institutes could not be conferred the deemed university status by the executive. Section 3 of the Act, which confers power on the Centre to notify deemed universities, amounted to delegation of the essential legislative function to the executive. This rendered Section 3 ultra the Constitution, the petition said.

Source: New Delhi /beta.thehindu/29 January 2010

HRD ready with stiff law to check unfair practices

To curb "unfair practices" like capitation fees for medical and technical education seats in deemed universities and private institutions, the Human Resource Development Ministry will seek approval of the Empowered Group of Ministers (EGoM) to bring in Parliament a Bill with "stringent provisions and stiff penalties".

"In order to protect the interest of students and applicants seeking admission to such institutions, the HRD Ministry

has, in consultation with the Law Ministry, prepared a legislative proposal titled 'The Prohibition of Unfair Practices in Technical and Medical Education Institutions and Universities Bill 2009'. It has incorporated stringent provisions and stiff penalties for errant institutions," official sources told The Indian Express.

The proposed Bill prohibits institutions from accepting fees or charges without issuing receipts and mandates them not to admit any student without conducting admission tests.

''The Bill categorically prohibits capitation fee sought either directly or indirectly by the institution and also that no capitation fee be offered by those seeking admission. It also provides for refund of percentage of fees deposited by the student, if subsequently he or she withdraws from the institution," the sources said.

If the ministry has its way, these institutions will be "prohibited from refusing to return or withholding documents of a student if he or she decides not to take admission".

The Bill also seeks to curb other malpractices like over-pricing of prospectus, barring advertisements by institutions, mandating them to maintain records, including answer sheets and other relevant material, for every candidate appearing for entrance tests.

The ministry will also seek the EGoM's nod for incorporating stiff penal provisions in the proposed Bill. "It has proposed imposition of civil, monetary penalties which may extend to Rs 50 lakh for violation of provisions to be enforced through State Education Tribunals. These tribunals are to be established under the Education Tribunals Bill 2009," the sources said.

''The Bill would provide for prosecution of offences for any contravention or attempt to contravene provisions of the Act and failure to pay the penalties imposed may lead to imprisonment ranging from one month to three years without or with a minimum of Rs 50,000 to Rs 5 lakh penalty."

The Planning Commission, the sources said, was of the view that the proposed law aptly sought to curb unfair practices, which have been on the rise in medical and technical institutions and universities, particularly deemed universities and private institutions.

Source: /indianexpress/27 January 2010

Joint entrance exam for finance courses

Beginning this year Delhi University's department of financial studies (DFS) and department of business economics (DBE) will conduct a joint entrance exam. Students appearing for the exam will be eligible to apply for a two-year master of finance and control (MFC) programme and two-year master of business economics (MBE) programme for the academic session commencing July 2010.

"Over the years we held separate exams, but maximum candidates applying for both the courses were common. The joint entrance will save time and resources for both departments," said Muneesh Kumar, coordinator, admission and placements, DFS. This is the first time that two departments of the university have agreed to conduct a common exam.

Discussing the joint entrance exam, Kumar says, "Both the departments selected candidates on the basis of four components: quantitative aptitude, verbal ability, reasoning and general economic awareness. These four components will remain the same."

Admission will be based on the scores of the joint entrance exam followed by interviews, which the departments will conduct separately.

"Going forward we would like to collaborate more with the financial studies department in terms of research and faculty exchange," says Aradhna Aggarwal, associate professor, DBE. "Since the focus of DFE is finance we would like to use the faculty from that department to teach our students and our faculty could help them strengthen economics topics."

Kumar says the exam is a step towards creating synergies between various departments of the university. The university offers a variety of business and finance related courses including the Faculty of Management Studies' MBA, a master of human resource and organisational development (MHROD) at Delhi School of Economics, and the MFC and MBE. According to Kumar, however, there is not much collaboration between these departments. "The time is not far when Indian universities will be facing competition from foreign universities.

The market-oriented courses face the biggest threat. We have realised that we can strengthen these courses by collaborating with different departments. We can't exist as islands of excellence," he said.

The admission test will be held on March 21 at Delhi, Ahmedabad, Bangalore, Bhopal, Bhubaneshwar, Chandigarh, Chennai, Guwahati, Hyderabad, Jaipur, Kolkata, Lucknow and Mumbai. Graduates or postgraduate students (any discipline) with 50% marks are eligible to apply. The prospects and applications forms can be downloaded (www.mfc.edu or www.mbe-du.org). Last date for submission of completed application form is 24th Feb.

Source: New Delhi /timesofindia/25 January 2010

Manipal University Introduces New Courses & increases the allocation of scholarships in2010

Manipal University**,** the leading higher education provider in India, announced that it has introduced new courses and allocate more scholarships for the year 2010 along with additional infrastructures and facilities to its students. The university has also tied up with many new foreign universities for better teaching and learning atmosphere on the campus.

Since establishing Kasturba Medical College in 1953, nineteen other institutions have been set up, and the excellence in higher education that began in Manipal 56 years ago, continues even today with a fresh look each year.

New Courses:

The university has added ten new courses taking the total number of courses in the University to 264. Registrar, Dr G.K. Prabhu, giving details of the new courses, admission details, scholarships and other activities of the university told reporters that by starting Manipal Centre for Europ ean Studies the University took the first big step in the direction of humanities. The university catered to higher education in medicine, engineering and management. So a Masters course in European Studies and Management adds more variety for students to choose from. "Diploma in Gandhian and Peace Studies, and also Certificate courses in Public Health and Global Health have already started," he said. "The other new courses introduced for 2010 include MS Wireless Embedded Systems, MS IT Management, MTech Chemical Engineering, MTech Environmental Engineering, MSc Pharmacoeconomics, and MSc Clinical Research management".

Scholarships: Manipal University has always encouraged students to perform to their full potential by providing them with scholarships. Meritorious and deserving candidates are given one of the several freeships and scholarships that exist in the university. "The allocation for the year 2010 is Rs 12.23 crores. It was Rs 7.93 crores in 2009 and Rs 6.83 crores prior to that," Dr Prabhu said.

Freeship – Candidates admitted to MBBS course within the first 500 ranks and BDS, BE, BPharm courses within the first 1000 ranks of the respective merit list are offered 100% freeship.

AICTE Scholarship - AICTE has introduced the scheme on tuition fee waiver for women, economically backward and physically handicapped meritorious students joining BE, BPharm and BHM courses.

AGE students scholarships – There is a 10 per cent tuition fee waiver for students of schools and colleges of Academy of General Education (AGE) joining any course at Manipal University. However, the waiver will be 25 per cent for those students joining Allied Health Sciences or Nursing courses.

Scholarships for Konkani Students – A similar waiver of tuition fees, 10 per cent and 25 per cent respectively, is applicable for Konkani students also.

Other Scholarships: - *GE* Scholarship, Harish B Fund Scholarship, ISLE Scholarship, ITC Scholarship, Maulana Azad National Scholarship and Philips Scholarships.

International Collaboration: - *Manipal* University has robust relationships with several US, European and Australian Universities regarding student and faculty exchange and collaborative research. 14 best students of KMC Manipal and Mangalore get to do their one month elective clinical training in Utrecht University and Groningen University in the Netherlands. Similar scholarships are available to students of Media & Communication in University of Queensland, Australia and Hochschule Bremen, Germany. Students of MIT get opportunities to do their internships in various Universities and industries across the world by being members of IAESTE.

Admissions: - Admissions for all these courses and for the existing under graduate and post g raduate courses have already begun. Prospectus and forms are available across the country at selected post offices and State Bank of India branches. Candidates can also visit www.manipal.edu and download the digital prospectus and application or apply online by paying the application fees through Credit Card or Net Banking or Demand Draft.

Online Entrance Test: - *Talking* about the online entrance test Dr Prahbu said; "Manipal University is known for its online entrance tests. Considering it to be quite popular and student friendly, the university has decided to start more centers where students can take their test online". The final score are displayed on the test screen soon after the completion of the test. The admissions are therefore, merit based and transparent. Candidates can choose the date, time and location depending on their own convenience.

Presently there are 21 centres & 6 more are being included this year. They are Allahabad, Kanpur, Patna, Ranchi, Varanasi and Vijayawada

Last date for receipt of applications: - *MBBS*, BDS, BE, BPharm, PharmD – **13.03.10**

MD, MS, PG Medical Diploma, MDS, PG Diploma in Dental Materials – **31.01.10**

About Manipal University

Manipal University is the leading higher education provider in India. Spread over 600 acres of green expanse, Manipal University is home to 20,000 students pursuing undergraduate and post graduate programs in diverse subjects. The University has a strong alumni network of over 72,000 members.

The University has created an ecosystem of teaching and research excellence making it a universally accepted destination by students. The breadth of disciplines and collaboration among constituent institutions gives unparalleled opportunity to students to cross departmental boundaries and explore different horizons

Source: /indiaprwire.wordpress/21 January 2010

MBA seats to go up by 3,000

In yet another good news for the management aspirants, the number of seats for MBA/MMS and other allied courses in Maharashtra will be increased by at least 3,000 from the next academic session starting in June.

Currently, there are 17,000 seats in 298 colleges in state, which are expected to go up to 20,000 after the All India

Council sanctions new colleges for Technical Education (AICTE).

‘‘With a slew of new colleges in pipeline we’re expecting at least 3,000 seats to be added in 2011-12 session,” director of technical education SK Mahajan told TOI. He added that the trend for pursuing management courses is rapidly growing among the students due to better job prospects. “Last year over 1 lakh students appeared for the MAH-MBA/ MMS-CET for 17,000 seats which is almost seven times as compared to the number of seats. This year, we are expecting nearly 1.50 lakh candidates to apply for the entrance exam. With so much competition, the hike in number of seats is a must,” he said.

Nonetheless, even the students and coaching class owners are expecting huge rush of aspirants for the MBA CET due to the online Common Admission Test (CAT) fiasco. “The number of candidates will jump by 50% and may touch 1.50 lakh because of several reasons including the CAT debacle. Generally, CAT results are out by the time MBA CET is conducted.

But this year, the exam was conducted even on Saturday and Sunday and its results are going to be out by February third week. Therefore I think, there will be a rush of the candidates for state entrance,” T Ram Mohan of PT Tutorials said. Nihit Mor of Career Launcher while endorsing Ram Mohan’s views stated that students were fed up of continuous problems with online CAT. “The decline in the popularity of CAT was primarily due to exorbitant fees charged by IIMs and other institutes. Ironically, IIMs alone charge around Rs 13 lakh for two years, which is just out of bounds for middleclass families. Therefore, a majority of students are not able to pursue their studies from these prestigious colleges,” he said.

Notably, the fees charged by colleges offering management programmes through DTE are around Rs 2 lakh. In top-rung colleges like Jamnalal Bajaj Institute of Management Studies (JBIMS) the fees are just Rs 25,000 per

year. Last year around 16,000 students appeared for MBA CET from the city and it is expected to go up to 20,000 this year, Mor stated. Deliberating on his stand, Mor pointed out that the global recession had hit placements in these premier Bschools. “Earlier, mostly foreign companies used to recruit students from IIMs and other colleges, but now their number have reduced significantly. Also, those coming are offering meager payscale as compared to previous years.”

Source: Pune /timesofindia/31 January 2010

More Science Scholarships for Students Okayed

The Centre on Thursday has approved doubling the number of CSIR-UGC national eligibility test (NET) fellowships in the remaining plan period so that the benefits can be extended to 12,000 students pursuing their career in science.

The total cost of providing fellowships for 12,000 students in the 11th Plan period – up from 6,000 fellowships offered in the 10th Plan period – has been estimated at Rs 444.34 crore.

The additional fellowships are required because the number of students opting for a career in science is on an upward trend since the last two years.

‘‘In December, 2009 almost 1.12 lakh students appeared in the NET as compared to 87,000 students who sat for the examinations in June 2009 and December, 2008,” Samir K Brahmachari, director general of Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) told Deccan Herald.

The University Grants Commission (UGC) too has enhanced the number of fellowships. The UGC will now offer 600 fellowships every year compared to 300 it used to give out in the past, he said.

Combining with CSIR’s planned increase in the number of Junior Research Fellow (JRF) to 2,400 every year, the new cabinet decision will ensure that every year 3,000 students can carry out their doctoral research.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh hinted at the enhancement in the fellowship amount both for the Junior Research Fellow and for Senior Research Fellow level.

Currently, a CSIR-UGC junior research fellow receives Rs 12,000 per month whereas a senior research fellow gets Rs 14,000. Both receive an annual contingency of Rs 20,000.

This is set to change as the Department of Science and Technology (DST) has initiated a fresh proposal recommending Rs 17,500 as the JRF amount and SRFs expecting to receive more than Rs 20,000 per month. The amount of contingency will be enhanced.

Source: New Delhi /deccanherald/21 January 2010

Ph.D aspirants miffed over new guidelines

The students interested in pursuing PhD from Panjab University will now have to follow an entirely new procedure. Besides not being able to choose a guide of their choice, they will also be required to get their thesis published in a refereed journal before submitting the final draft.

In a bid to give a new life to research work and to upgrade the standard of research, the University Grants Commission (UGC) has come up with a new pattern for pursuing PhD. All the recommendations by the UGC in this regard have been discussed and approved by the Panjab University in its recently held Senate meeting.

Under the new guidelines, the students pursuing PhD will be required to get their thesis published in a refereed journal. Also, once the final draft is submitted, the student will have to submit the copy of the same to UGC, where it would be placed on a website shared by all universities and colleges in the country. This is being done with an aim to check duplication of any sorts.

About the new changes, UGC Secretary, Prof R K Chauhan said, “The entire procedure, from getting enrolled into PhD

to pursuing it, has been changed. There were a lot of complaints coming in about duplication of work. So we would be placing the work on website for knowledge of all. If anyone finds duplication of work, they can complain to us and necessary action would be taken against that student."

According to the new pattern, the universities can no longer allow PhD through distance learning and students can no longer choose their own guides. It would be the responsibility of any university to form heads having different specialised teachers. Based on the type of research work that a student wants to do, the teachers concerned will have to take care of him/her. Also, the maximum number of students that a guide can help with PhD has been increased to eight from six.

Meanwhile, the students at PU are not too happy with the proposal, as they feel getting a thesis published in a refereed journal before the final draft is very difficult. The rule of not being able to choose their own guide is also bothering them. Anureet, a student at the varsity said, "I was planning to pursue PhD, but now it seems to be a distant dream at least at PU, which is already short of faculty. Even though the standard of research work would be improved, it would also require equally serious teachers who are willing to share the burden with students."

Source: Chandigarh /indianexpress/18 January 2010

Scholarships announced

Roehampton University, UK, has recently announced the launch of its new scholarship scheme. Open to international students, over 200 scholarships will be awarded in line with recognised achievements — including language qualifications and other educational achievements — and will vary in value rising to £2300 for MBA students.

The scheme, announced recently by the university's vice-chancellor Paul O'Prey in the Capital, is aimed at students completing the professional practice certificate in Special Educational Needs (SEN) established through the UK-India Education Research Initiative (UKIERI) and accredited by the Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI). HE Sir Richard Stagg, the British High Commissioner to India, formally inaugurated the ceremony.

Granted university status in 2004, the university has its roots in four colleges devoted to education and specifically teacher training established in the mid-19 th century. As regards its partnerships with India, it has been working with the University of Baroda in the area of mental health & also with the Gujarat government on the establishment of the first institute for Mental Health in the state, informed O'Prey.

He says: "Since 2004, the university has rapidly established itself as a forward thinking university that not only recognises its historical roots, but which also engages with the changing world with strengths in journalism and media, sports science, clinical neuroscience and clinical nutrition."

He informs: "In May the university will open the new Roehampton Business School, building on its existing strength in international business and its excellent links with business, the public sector and charities, which reflects the fact that London hosts many of the world's leading companies."

The university has also built a reputation for its research, says O'Prey. He elaborates: "In the most recent Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), the government's assessment of the quality of research conducted in our universities came out as one of the best of any modern university. A third of our research is rated internationally excellent. Two of the subject areas — dance and biological anthropology — came out as the best in the country, beating off the stiffest of competition from the most ancient universities."

As a part of its philosophy, Roehampton teaches students in an environment enriched by research that is making a real impact on the world. For instance, its work on modern slavery was cited in a recent publication by Universities UK — the umbrella body for British Universities — as one of the top 100 major discoveries, developments and inventions by academics over the last 50 years. Similarly, the university is working to preserve and promote the rich heritage of films in Cuba and advising state governments in Australia on the private provision of public services. He sums up: "India is becoming a very important part of our academic activity and we are becoming popular with Indian students wanting to study at our university at Master's level."

Source: /timesofindia/25 January 2010

Tax writeoffs for education

The cost of educating our children is rising consistently. It's a matter of concern for all of us. One relief is the tax benefit provided for spending on children's education. The Income Tax Act provides a direct deduction on account of fees paid for the education of dependent children. The act also provides for deduction on account of interest on loans taken for higher education of children.

This deduction in respect of school fees is covered under Section 80C of the I-T Act. A parent can claim a deduction of payment made for tuition fee to any university, college, school or any other educational institution. The deduction on payments made towards tuition fee can be claimed up to Rs 1 lakh, together with deduction in respect of insurance, provident fund and pension. But, there are certain conditions to get this. It can only be claimed in respect of two dependent children and for fees to an educational institution within India. And, for tuition fee only. Payment as donation or development fee to an educational institution does not qualify.

On Interest Paid

You can also get the benefit of direct deduction on the interest paid for a loan taken for the purpose of higher

education. This is available under Section 80E of the I-T Act. This benefit can be claimed for a loan taken for education of yourself, your spouse, your children and the child for whom you are a legal guardian. It can be claimed for eight years in a row, beginning from the year when the interest payment starts.

As the parent as well as the child, the person taking the education can claim the benefit start claiming this deduction once he starts earning and paying the interest himself. There is no cap on the amount up to which the deduction can be claimed.

The loan in this regard can be taken from any financial Institution or charitable institution recognised by the central government. It can be claimed on a loan taken for education anywhere in the world.

Source: New Delhi /business-standard/17 January 2010

The basic priorities for education reforms

Education reforms, including the reorganisation of the curriculum, changes in the school system and reformation of school management, should be an ongoing process. The dictum, 'there is nothing permanent but change', is nowhere more apt than in the domain of knowledge.

Modern education in India is often criticised for being based on rote-learning, rather than laying stress on creative problem-solving. Student workload is crammed so full that there is no room left anymore for critical thinking.

Around 30% of the children in the country do not receive even primary education, even as there is a huge shortage of seats for higher education. Every year, four to five million graduates come out of colleges, but the percentage of those who pursue higher research is much smaller compared with developing countries like China. If this grim situation persists, the country risks being left behind in the race for economic empowerment of its people.

Fake degrees are another problem ailing the sector. In one raid in Bihar recently, about one lakh fake degrees were found. In February 2009, the UGC found that 19 fake varsities were operating in India.

Given all these discomforting indicators, what should be the basic priorities for education reforms? Some of them ought to be:

1. Implementation of the Right to Education Bill; India needs to invest more to have an intensive and proper primary and high school education, rather than focusing on higher education & research level alone. In this regard, the Bill is a giant leap forward. But such initiatives hardly achieve anything if they are not implemented with a single-minded vision of improving the teaching standards.
2. Our current education system should encourage the use of latest technologies in teaching and studying. The system has a fair distance to cover to be called inclusive. Technology can help bridge the gap. It can also produce a great deal of quality improvement.
3. We should ensure that the money spent on higher education is giving us a technological edge. So, the whole emphasis should be on research and innovation. It is be easier said than done, but it would not be an uphill task, either.
4. Privatisation of higher education should be accelerated. Higher education requires more investment in physical infrastructure and growth in student enrolment. Since the public sector alone can't meet these demands, it's sensible that the government opens more avenues for the participation of private players.

Source: /financialexpress/18 January 2010

ANALYSIS/OPINION/INNOVATIVE PRACTICE

44 Deemed-to-be universities to be shut: Govt. to SC

An institute on Janpath in New Delhi that goes under the name of the National Museum, Institute of the History of Art, Conservation and Museology and claims to have 135 students including 27 researchers, is among 44 deemed-to-be universities across the country that the government plans to close.

The institutes recommended for derecognition have 1,19,363 students at the under-graduate and post-graduate levels in addition to 2,124 pursuing research in M.Phil and Ph.D programmes. An estimated 74,808 pursue distance education programmes.

In an 11-page affidavit filed before the Supreme Court today, the Ministry of Human Resource and Development, represented by Solicitor General Gopal Subramanium, stated that all 44 institutes had been recommended for closure.

The recommendation has come from a review committee of experts led by Professor P N Tandon, formerly of the AIIMS and an ex-president of the Indian National Science Academy. The panel had been created in June 2009.

The objective of the committee was to "review functioning of the existing deemed to be universities, and ensure that standards of higher education and research are maintained by such institutions as to justify their continuance as deemed to be universities".

The panel invited all 130 deemed-to-be universities for "face to face discussions" during August-September 2009. Of the 130 invited, 126 attended the sessions, stated Upamanyu Basu, Director, HRD Ministry in the affidavit.

The committee report divides the status of 126 institutes into three categories. The work of the last category of 44 institutes was termed "neither on past performance nor on their promise for the future have they attributed to retain their status as deemed to be universities".

The panel said 38 institutes justify with their achievements, performance and potential to continue as deemed universities while 44 were found to be "deficient in some aspects which need to be rectified over a three-year period suggested by the committee".

Another 44 were recommended for derecognition. Tamil Nadu tops this list with 16, including one sponsored by the government. Karnataka follows with six and Uttar Pradesh is at No. 3 with four. Haryana, Maharashtra, Uttarakhand and Rajasthan have three each while Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Orissa, Puducherry, Bihar and Delhi have one each which will be closed.

Three government-sponsored institutes recommended for closure are the Nava Nalanda Mahavira in Bihar which has 525 students including 35 Ph.D scholars, Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development at Sriperumbudur in Tamil Nadu with 61 post-graduate students and the one at Janpath, New Delhi.

‘‘The institutions which have been recommended for non-continuation as deemed to be universities together with their constituent units are located in 13 states/union territories and are located within the geographical and academic domain of 28 state universities,” Basu said in his affidavit.

Aberrations found in the functioning of the 44 institutes are “undesirable management architecture” of families rather than professionals running them; violation of principles and guidelines of excellence in teaching and research or innovations and “engaged in thoughtless introduction of unrelated programmes and proliferation of degrees”; very little evidence of noticeable efforts in regard to emerging areas of knowledge; “little evidence of commitment” towards research or ability to draw institutional or principal investigator-based research funding on competitive terms, UG and PG level programmes “fragmented” with “concocted nomenclatures”, abuse of freedom and flexibility in matters of admission and fee structure.

‘‘Many institutions which attained deemed university status from being a college increased their intake capacity disproportionately and in some cases exponentially in relation to the qualified faculty strength and other academic infrastructure,” the affidavit stated.

A Task Force is preparing a plan to “safeguard” interests of students enrolled in the institutes “whose declaration is revoked in public interest and is accordingly required to cease operations as a deemed to be university”, the affidavit stated.

The below-par institutions will be required to revert to their status as an “affiliated college” of the statutory state university or state medical or dental universities concerned so that students would be able to complete ongoing courses and obtain degrees from the affiliating universities, the affidavit stated.

‘‘The Central government is determined to take appropriate steps for securing the future of students enrolled in the 44 institutions in accordance with the recommendations of the Task Force,” Basu said in the affidavit.

‘‘The government is committed to ensure that the standards of higher education is not lowered through the continuation of any institutions as a deemed to be university as is not found to have either performance or potential to retain the status of a university,” the affidavit said.

The government said it was still waiting for draft regulations of the UGC for declaration of institutions as deemed-to-be universities.

The government said it was in the process of finalising a legislative proposal for regulating the entry and operations of foreign education providers in India. The proposal, the Ministry said, will be introduced in Parliament after obtaining necessary approvals.

THE VARSITIES OFF GOVT LIST

1. Christ College, Bangalore, Karnataka
2. Vignan’s Foundation for Science Technology and Research, Guntur, Andhra Pradesh
3. Lingaya’s University, Faridabad, Haryana
4. St Peter’s Institute of Higher Education and Research, Chennai, Tamil Nadu
5. Noorul Islam Centre for Higher Education, Kanyakumari, Tamil Nadu
6. Jaypee Institute of Information Technology, Noida, Uttar Pradesh
7. Shobit Institute of Engineering and Technology, Meerut, Uttar Pradesh
8. Sumandeep Vidyapeeth, Vadodara, Gujarat
9. Sri Devraj Urs Academy of Higher Education and Research, Kolar, Karnataka
10. Yenepoya University, Mangalore, Karnataka
11. BLDE University, Bijapur, Karnataka
12. Krishna Institute of Medical Sciences, Satara, Maharashtra
13. D.Y. Patil Medical College, Kolhapur, Maharashtra
14. Meenakshi Academy of Higher Education and Research, Chennai, Tamil Nadu.
15. Chettinad Academy of Research and Education, Padur, Tamil Nadu
16. HIHT University, Dehradun, Uttarakhand
17. Santosh University, Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh
18. Maharishi Matkandeshwar University, Ambala, Haryana
19. Manav Rachna International University, Faridabad, Haryana
20. Sri Siddhartha Academy of Higher education, Tumkur, Karnataka
21. Jain University, Bangalore, Karnataka
22. Tilak Maharashtra Vidyapeeth, Pune, Maharashtra
23. Siksha Anusandhan, Bhubaneswar, Orissa
24. Janardhan Rai Nagar Rajasthan Vidyapeeth, Udaipur, Rajasthan
25. Institute of Advanced Studies in Education of Gandhi Vidya Mandir, Sardarshahr, Rajasthan

26. Mody Institute of Technology and Science, Sikar, Rajasthan
27. Dr MGR Educational and Research Institute, Chennai, Tamil Nadu
28. Saveetha Institute of Medical and Technical Sciences, Chennai, Tamil Nadu
29. Kalasalingam Academy of Research and Education, Virudhunagar, Tamil Nadu
30. Periyar Maniammai Institute of Science and Technology, Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu
31. Academy of Maritime Education and Training, Chennai, Tamil Nadu
32. Vel's Institute of Science, Technology and Advanced studies (VISTAS), Chennai, Tamil Nadu
33. Karpagam Academy of Higher Education, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu
34. Vel Tech Rangarajan Dr Sagunthala Research and Development Institute of Science and Technology, Chennai, Tamil Nadu
35. Gurukul Kangri Vishwavidyalaya, Hardwar, Uttarakhand
36. Graphic Era University, Dehradun, Uttarakhand
37. Nehru Gram Bharati Vishwavidyalaya, Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh
38. Sri Balaji Vidyapeeth, Puducherry
39. Vinayaka Mission's Research Foundation, Salem, Tamil Nadu
40. Bharath Institute of Higher Education and Research, Chennai, Tamil Nadu
41. Ponnaiyah Ramajayam Institute of Science and Technology, Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu

GOVT. SPONSORED DEEMED UNIVERSITIES

1. Nava Nalanda, Nalanda, Bihar
2. Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development, Sriperumbudur, Tamilnadu
3. National Museum Institute of the History of Art, Conservation and Museology, Delhi

Source: New Delhi /indianexpress/19 January 2010

A Feeling for Books

Reading books can go beyond enhancing one's vocabulary. It can facilitate creative learning and all round development in a child.

Contrary to the common perception that children are not reading enough, Booker-prize winning Irish author Anne Enright feels that children today are reading more as they are exposed to a diverse selection of reading material. "Digital proliferation has expanded access in terms of reading books," says Enright.

"However, there is a perceptible difference in terms of the reading habits of children of today with children of yesterday. Today, with the sophistication and all pervading influence of mass media and digital technology children are exposed to a multitude of experiences from a very early age. Consequently, they are far more mature and discerning as readers. At one level they seek storybooks that can supplement their real-life observations and experiences. Hence, there is a visible preference for realistic themes over plain fantasy," she observes.

Enright says that there is an innate curiosity in every child and it is a natural tendency in children to explore this curiosity through books. "Since children today mature earlier they end up seeking and reading books that have been traditionally deemed inappropriate for their age. However, this is no reason for parents to be worried, in fact, they should understand that reading preferences cannot be censored. It is enough for parents and teachers to be aware of the specific reading preferences of children. Every book can impact a child's intellectual and emotional growth either positively or negatively. It is the responsibility of parents and teachers to facilitate positive development and, hence, they should be approachable and encourage children to share their perceptions and observations in relation to books," explains Enright. Irrespective of what they read, it is important for children to read. Taking cognisance of this fact the British School in Delhi organised a series of workshops for its students with seven literary giants, who were on their way to the Jaipur Literary Festival. The authors included Wole Soyinka, Alexander McCall-Smith, Roddy Doyle, Ali Sethi, among others. The authors conducted workshops on various aspects of writing, and also on how reading in itself can be made more enjoyable.

"A hallmark of a well written story is one that strikes a chord in the heart and constantly sparks the imagination. All words and sentences have to simultaneously trigger pictures to make the reading experience enjoyable and complete. For this to happen it is advisable to constrict the use of adjectives and choose words that are strong and effective," shares Doyle. According to him, there is no straitjacketed formula in terms of finding inspirations that often translate to characterisations. "But every book at one level resonates something about the author. People who have an innate ability to sense something extraordinary in ordinary situations can become authors," adds Doyle.

The initiative by the British School provided an opportunity to bring students directly in contact with world-renowned authors. Students participating in the workshops had a range of queries and observations. "I want to become a writer and always wanted to know about the process involved in getting a book published," says Angad Bagai, a Year 12 student. "I understand now that networking and participation in writer forums and literary workshops (to garner visibility) is one way forward," he says. "During the course of the workshop, among other things, I learnt that writing a novel or book could never actually be a long planned conscious decision. It is a manifestation of the author's experiences and beliefs and can happen at any stage of life," shares Lyala Khan, a Year 7 student.

Source: /timesofindia/25 January 2010

Affiliating system, an outdated practice

Terming the dominance of the affiliating system as a practice that was outdated & anachronistic, VC Kulandaisamy, chairman, Tamil Virtual University, said this was "sapping the energy of the Indian higher education system and inhibiting its march towards excellence."

Speaking at the 152nd convocation of the University of Madras here on Tuesday, he said the weakness of higher education in India it is imparted in affiliated colleges, unlike in the developed countries where higher education happens on university campuses.

"All over the world, higher education happens on university campuses. Even the humblest of universities have a modest strength of students, infrastructure, academic manpower and an atmosphere of inquiry, investigation and research. The entire faculty has research as part of its duty. In India, higher education is in a large number of small institutions, most of which do not meet even the modest requirements of university-level academic function," he said.

The bulk of the faculty in higher education -- almost 84% -- is not expected to do research in India. The strength of PG students is only 9.3 and even among them, 67% do not have an atmosphere of research, which is a prerequisite for PG education. The universities, which constitute the fertile soil for research, have only a fraction of the total higher education faculty (16%), Kulandaisamy said.

A total of 596 graduates received degrees, prizes and medals at the ceremony in person while 86,806 did so in absentia. University of Madras vice-chancellor G Thiruvasagam said that new infrastructural facilities were going to be established at the various campuses of the university at a cost of Rs 90.25 crore. These include the construction of a multi-storeyed building and a students' amenities centre at Chepauk and the construction of an indoor stadium at Chetpet Union Grounds.

Source: Chennai /timesofindia/20 January 2010

Education needs complete overhaul

Higher education in India today is in crisis. There has to be a complete overhaul of the educational system. There is a window of opportunity for reforming the system to make it relevant to the modern era but the time is short.

"If it is not done within three to five years from now, it cannot ever be done.

And if it is not carried out, the country cannot sustain its growth rate and would be plunged into darkness again," warned Advisor to the Prime Minister on Public Information, Infrastructure and Innovations Dr Sam Pitroda here today.

Delivering the third Ravenshaw University Development Trust annual lecture at the university, the famed innovator, technocrat and the man behind India's telecom revolution said higher education can no longer be seen in the silos of degrees.

World-over universities are turning into fertile grounds of innovation and entrepreneurship, not only creating knowledge but also utilising it to create wealth.

One cannot rely on old paradigm of university. Today learning methods have changed completely due to Internet and IT. Content is created on the net by best of experts and as a result the role of teacher has begun to change. He is now more of a mentor in the true traditional Indian guru mould. "We need to think out of the box and be innovative to usher in real change in the system," he said.

The Indian Government is set to invest $ 67 million in reforming the higher education sector. As many as 30 new universities are to be established, of which 14 would be completely different from the traditional university concept. They would focus on innovation and chart the course for steering India's progress by churning out suitable and able generations.

Multi-disciplinary education has to be the course.

Pitroda also pointed out that there was a big disconnect between the education policy-makers and students. Old people cannot design education, though experts, who cannot see what today technology-driven generation is wants. "India's USP today is its youth.

The policy-makers cannot see what the kids need in terms of options, choices and flexibility. Therefore, the young should be involved in the reforms process," he stressed.

He also emphasised on making education affordable and accessible to all. The Knowledge Commission has listed 3 priorities, expansion of education to include all, increasing quality and making it equitable and accessible to all.

Source: Cuttack /expressbuzz/17 January 2010

Education shouldn't be a profit earning business: Chidambaram

Union Home Minister P Chidambaram on Sunday said that private participation in higher education was important for the spread of education but not at the cost of using the sector for profiteering.

"I believe that private participation in higher education is important for the spreading of education but I am strictly against private business with education," Chidambaram said at the closing ceremony, marking 150 years of St Xavier's College here.

"In fact, today's education has either become a money spinning machine or a moth-eaten system but we need to change that and make higher education available to all," the Home Minister said in the Convocation and Valedictory Programme, 2010.

"Education should be left away from business and there should be no profit from education," he said.

The Central government had laid down the Higher Education policy and higher education was a domain where there was no place for profiteers, the Home Minister said. In fact, according to the Home Minister, it was not only school education but higher education which was essential for the

development of the nation and in this sphere the country lags far behind the international standards.

"When all over the globe, 40 per cent of the school-going students make it to colleges or universities, in India only 11 to 12 per cent of the students make it to the higher education section. This should be changed," he said. Chidambaram conferred Nihil Ultra Award of Honour to Rev Father P C Mathew SJ, principal of the St Xavier's College.

Source: Kolkata /indianexpress/17 January 2010

Education: An unfinished revolution

India's education system is a juggernaut. Over 290 million students attend educational institutions on a typical working day. enrollment has increased tremendously in schools, technical and professional courses, colleges, distance learning centers, even coaching centers. In 1951, 19 million were enrolled at elementary level (classes 1 to 8), just 1.5 million from 9 to 12. Today, elementary sections have over 130 million enrolled, 37 million in higher classes. Higher education has seen a stunning 100-fold enrollment growth — from 1.7 lakh students in 1951 to over 12 million currently. What drives Indians is hope that education will open doors to a better life.

Here are some other numbers. India has the world's largest population of illiterates —about 380 million. Nearly every child in the 6-11 years age-group is enrolled but by class 5, one-third have dropped out, by class 8, half; by class 10 nearly two-thirds are out of school. Only 10% go for higher education. In all, over 170 million children and youth in the age group 6-24 years are out of the education system.

Why is this? Experts cite the four Great Divides: rural-urban, men-women, rich-poor and the caste divide. In each case, there is a disadvantaged section, which finds it difficult to get access to education and thus gets left out. Back in 1951, 35% of urbanites and only 12% of rural people were literate. In 2006, 80% urbanites were literate but in rural areas literacy rate was 59%. The story of dalits and tribals is similar, although there has been an even greater surge in their desire for education. In 1961, literacy among dalits was 10% and among tribals 9%. This increased to 55% and 47% respectively in 2006, a massive increase but still behind more advanced sections. Finally, there is the rich-poor divide. Among society's poorest third, literacy is about 46%. In the middle third, it improves to 65%, while among the richest third, it is over 72%.

Though it's gone up since 1951, government expenditure — in 2006-07, total expense on education was Rs.1.33 lakh crore (3.6% GDP) — is insufficient to educate 1.2 billion Indians. Forty years ago, the Kothari Commission argued that at least 6% of GDP should be allocated to education, but spending has always remained below par.

Low government spending has led to growing inequity in education, as those with better resources get better education, while the majority have to make do with mediocre standards.

Source: /timesofindia/25 January 2010

Fruits of science and technology must be available to everyone

Last year, 56-year-old Irina Bokova of Bulgaria was elected the director general of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). She is the first woman to hold this post. After working in Bulgarian governments, both before and after the fall of communist rule, Bokova has been a diplomat and special representative to the UN. On her first visit to India after becoming the director general, she spoke to Subodh Varma on her vision for UNESCO:

What is this 'new humanism' that you want to bring into UNESCO's approach?

Many countries, like India, are showing dynamism in their economic progress. But they are struggling to achieve the Millennium Development Goals of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, achieving universal primary education, empowering women, reducing child mortality, combating diseases, ensuring environmental sustainability etc. 'New Humanism' seeks to put these in focus. It stresses an inclusive humanism, which takes within it the environment, nature, and strives to build new values. It is 'new' because it is different from the 18th century concept of individual-based good.

What does the vision of 'science and technology for humanity' mean?

Firstly, it means that the fruits of science and technology should become available for all of humanity and not get restricted to some countries or some strata of society, as they are presently. Secondly, it means that science needs to be used effectively to resolve common problems facing humanity, like diseases, climate change, water management and others. At UNESCO, we have been trying to facilitate this process through action on the ground & by providing information to all.

Is it true that big, wasteful bureaucracies stifle the UN and affiliates?

Absolutely untrue. Since 2001, there has been a systematic rationalisation of functions, expenditure and jobs in all the UN organisations. Many of the earlier problems are getting resolved. There has also been an effort to 'deliver as one', that is bring about synergies among various UN agencies. In my visit here, for example, i met all the UN agencies together at a meeting, to evolve a common approach of work in India.

How do you view the Indian government's efforts towards 'education for all'?

The Indian government is aware of the gigantic problems it faces the unacceptably high illiteracy and dropout rates, low enrollment in higher education and others. It has a positive commitment to address these problems through increased

spending and through legislative measures like the right to education. Quality of education is another major issue training of teachers. In my discussion with the minister, i found a deep awareness and political will to address these problems. UNESCO will assist in all these areas through inputs for framing policy and also by concrete action on the ground. We are setting up the Mahatma Gandhi Institute for Peace Education and Sustainable Development, a category 1 UNESCO institute here.

Source: /timesofindia/25 January 2010

Hard lessons to be learnt

They can't say they weren't warned: alarm bells have been ringing for at least two years. Against a backdrop of violent assaults on Indian students and their exploitation by dodgy training colleges, education experts have long been telling governments around the country that unless the problems of foreign students in Australia are tackled, international education, one of this country's most lucrative export businesses, could be heading for a calamity.

Now, with the perception that foreign students are exploited on one hand and neglected on the other, plus a host of other factors, those fears appear to be coming to fruition. Put simply, large numbers of foreign students have stopped applying to study in Australia. The tap that once gushed, particularly from India, is at half flow.

The latest Immigration Department figures show that from July to October 31 last year, when there was intense media reporting of attacks on Indian students and college closures, applications for student visas from all countries fell 23 per cent compared with the same period the year before. Applications from India plunged 46 per cent and those from Nepal, Australia's fastest growing market, plummeted by 85 per cent.

At La Trobe University, new applications from Indian students for the first semester this year have halved compared with the same time in 2009 - a worrying prospect for a university that sources 22 per cent of its foreign students from India. Universities rely on international-student fees for an average of 15 per cent of their funding.

Other factors, such as the financial crisis, the Australian dollar's strength and Canberra's crackdown on fraudulent applications for student visas from India have also contributed to the downturn in the sector. In vocational education alone, more than three times as many visas were refused overall, with Indian visa refusals up nearly tenfold. In the higher education sector, where foreign students make up a quarter of all students taking full-time equivalent courses, overall student visas granted have fallen by 16 per cent. Visas for Indian applicants have plunged from 13,345 to 4155, a drop of nearly 70 per cent.

The tectonic plates of Australia's $17 billion international education industry are shifting, but what the final landscape will look like is not yet clear. The industry is bracing for a significant contraction and there's no amount of government spin that can reverse that trajectory.

Glenn Withers is the chief executive of Universities Australia, the industry peak body that represents 39 universities. He says problems that have their roots in the low-quality end of the vocational education market, as well as fears over Indian student safety, are beginning to strangle the university sector. "We believe within the universities that we have suffered significant collateral damage," he says.

Middle-class Indian parents with children seeking to study abroad are looking to Britain, Canada and the US rather than Australia, he says. And while this year's first-semester applications are still coming in, an overall drop of about 10-20 per cent is expected from India. He is unrelenting in his criticism of state and federal governments, which, he says, failed to heed warnings given to them as early as two years ago.

Universities Australia raised with state governments issues relating to safety, including dismay expressed by Chinese and Indian authorities over this issue, the need for concessions on public transport, disenchantment among students over being treated as cash cows, and the poor regulation of private training colleges.

"We were warning: look it's a reputational issue, it's a brand Australia issue, please let us work with you," Withers says. "The states weren't interested in listening. I think they thought they could just ride this industry to their benefit without worrying about their role in any serious way."

Similarly, he says the Federal Government, which was "enamoured of short-term labour market convenience [for] employers" failed to respond to concerns that immigration should instead feed into long-term national development benefits.

"Permanent migration should not have been skewed for those [short-term] purposes. They realised that and began to repair it, but too late," he says. "We were disappointed that earlier warnings took the unfortunate development of street assaults to lead to the reforms that should have been in place already. We saw this two years ago as an issue, tried to transmit it to government and were meeting resistance."

Russell Mahoney, a spokesman for federal Education Minister Julia Gillard, says the Education Department regularly consults Universities Australia and that federal and state education ministers last year committed to improving the experience of international students by tackling issues including support services and immigration. The department could not immediately find records of meetings or correspondence with Universities Australia from two years ago.

Despite the damage to higher education, Withers is optimistic about a recovery by the middle of the year, provided the Federal Government takes certain steps, including implementing the recommendations of the Baird Review of the legislation that governs international

education (the interim report of which has been released), and other measures such as granting travel concessions to international students.

If these changes are made, and provided there are no new major events to damage the reputation of the sector in India, reasonably steady growth is possible, he says.

John Rosenberg, La Trobe University's deputy vice-chancellor for international and future students, says Withers' list of conditions "sounds like the Messiah coming". "Unless there is some significant change in the way we are dealing with this issue [of dodgy colleges and Indian student safety] at the moment, I'm not optimistic about the second semester," he says. Although the Victorian Government is concerned about attacks on Indian students, it, and the police, have misunderstood Indian culture, Rosenberg says.

"This is a very overt culture. Things are very visible, very loud, very noisy and very obvious when they happen, and we've been doing things in a very, very quiet … not obvious manner. I think we need to be much more overt. I think the police force needs to recognise there is a serious problem."

He believes police need to have a strong, visible presence in high-crime areas. Police need not only to be seen to be tackling the problem but actually reducing assaults.

While street crime has contributed to the damage that has ultimately been done to universities, Victorian TAFE Association executive director David Williams says dodgy colleges have also caused significant problems for the TAFE sector.

The State Government, while it has stepped up efforts to weed out unscrupulous operators, is still acting too slowly, he says. He is not optimistic about a recovery in the industry any time this year.

"I think as it stands at the moment it's more likely to stay the same or even decline a little further before we see an upswing."

Williams says most TAFE colleges are predicting a substantial drop in applications from Indian students, with one college budgeting for a 60 per cent decline.

Like Withers, Williams is frustrated that his calls for a clean-up of the vocational education sector, a vital component of Victoria's economy, have for so long fallen on deaf ears. "We have been calling for more stringent auditing procedures and greater resources in that area [dodgy colleges] and we have in the past been working co-operatively with Victoria Police on the security issues as well. But all around there is a degree of frustration," he says.

So what of the private colleges, some of which have been accused of playing a major role in damaging Australia's reputation for quality education by recruiting students for the purpose of making profits rather than providing high-standard education? The Australian Council for Private Education and Training was unable to supply data on enrollments at private colleges this year. But they are reporting "varied enrollment patterns", with some showing numbers in decline while others are steady. Its outlook for the private vocational sector is not particularly optimistic.

Says spokesman Ben Eade: "Factors including reputational damage from widely reported violent incidents, the actions of some unscrupulous operators, the strength of the Australian dollar, inconsistent or knee-jerk regulatory action and a tightening of the visa application process while regulatory arrangements in our competitor countries have been relaxed, have all contributed to a drop in student visa applications and approvals, which could threaten the viability of colleges and lead to job losses."

Universities and colleges, once places of learning, are now also places of earning, and what used to be the education sector is often referred to as an export industry. There is pessimism, frustration and anxiety in every corner of Australia's international education industry. Despite this, insiders are optimistic that in the long run the industry is likely to emerge as smaller, cleaner and more focused on quality education, and remain one of Australia's biggest money earners.

Source: /theage.com.au/23 January 2010

How to push your kids, without pushing them over the edge

3 Idiots has certainly caused quite a stir. There's been the Chetan Bhagat war of course, but the controversy I hope that has lasting impact is the debate over our educational system and the way we raise our children. Are we burdening our kids with our obsessive expectations for high exam scores? Are we limiting their freedom by guiding them into more traditional professions that are considered 'safe'? The stats, I am afraid, say yes.

16 students a day, kill themselves due to exam stress in the country. India accounts for 10% of all teenage suicides, and South India has even earned the unfortunate reputation of being the 'suicide capital of the world'. But let's not level our complaints too heavily on our country's mothers and fathers. Most are not resorting to authoritative means like Professor ViruS . They just want their children to be happy and to attain success. In fact it is completely reasonable to have high expectations of your kids. Research shows that children whose parents maintain high standards of them do better in school, while those who do not are more prone to succumb to laziness and underachievement.

Here's how you can push your kids without pushing them over the edge.

Have high, but reasonable expectations

You must accept firstly that each child is unique. Expecting all kids to achieve the same standards often leads to great disappointment—some are simply imbued with greater aptitudes than others. The key then is to determine the strength of the child's abilities, and to set your expectations accordingly.

For instance, if your daughter demonstrates a high calibre in maths by scoring consistently above 90% on her exams,

but suddenly begins to slide down to 70% because she is spending more time with her friends or using the internet, it would be reasonable to encourage her to set her targets in the 90% zone. On the other hand, if your son has consistently performed poorly in maths and has an average of 45%, expecting him to get above 90% would be unfeasible. However, encouraging him to set a target 55% would be very realistic.

Be fair, firm, and consistent

Be sure to establish ground rules regarding your children's homework and daily routine. Whether it's the number of hours they study, watch TV, or spend on Facebook, there must be clearly articulated parameters for what is permissible and what is not—as well as consequences for breaking the rules. Punishments need to also fit the crime. For instance, beating your child or denying him complete access to TV or the internet or friends for weeks because of a minor infraction like failing to submit a homework assignment on time could prove to be a serious de-motivator.

You must also be firm in your decisions and not be afraid to say no when the situation warrants it. Children may attempt to avoid responsibilities by using tactics such as yelling, crying or pleading for sympathy. They will certainly test you, and if you give in, they will learn that the rules are bendable and will bend them at every opportunity. But if you are consistent, they will realize you mean business, and after a few days or weeks will respect your strictness. Say your 12 year old daughter wants to go with her friends to the mall, but you refuse. She gives you the silent treatment for days and even refuses to eat. Feeling guilty, you eventually give in and let her go. You've temporarily patched things up; however, the next time she doesn't get her way, she knows exactly which tactics to use.

Don't push, facilitate

In the process of helping children achieve their potential, parents sometimes become lost in the role of being disciplinarians. The loving, intimate discussions they used to have with their dear little ones suddenly begin to sound more like orders being barked out to military cadets: 'Stop eating so much junk food.' 'Get back in there and finish your homework.' 'You had better start bringing home better scores,' and so on.

My suggestion here is to do less pushing and more facilitating. Engage in meaningful conversations with your kids to find out what they are up to. Ask them questions about their friends, the best part of their day, difficult decisions they might have made, someone they helped, or something funny that happened in school. You should also inquire about what kinds of problems they are facing—as well as how they are addressing those problems. By engaging with your kids in this way, you establish a rapport with them, opening channels of communication that will make them more receptive to your suggestions and feedback. But more importantly, such meaningful dialogue hones their critical thinking skills, which in turn improves their decision making abilities.

Help them put failure in perspective

All children face failure from time to time—getting a shockingly low score on a test, freezing up while giving a speech, dropping a ball and costing their team the game. And when they do, their feelings of embarrassment and humiliation can eat directly into their sense of self-esteem. When their self-esteem drops, so does their concentration and their motivation, and their likelihood of failing again, which causes a negative downward spiral. It's at times like these that your children need your support the most. They need to know that know your love is not dependent on their success. At the same time, they do need to realize that your approval is dependent on their effort. For example, if your son returns home and shows you an English essay that is completely marked up in red, and you know he could have done better, you should tell him you are not satisfied with his performance. However, not eating together with him or kissing him goodnight would signal to him that you only love him when he succeeds. This would intensify your son's fear of failure. He might then go to great lengths to ensure he doesn't fail and risk losing your love, including cheating or lying.

Make your kids play

All work and no play does indeed make Jack a dull boy. Play is an excellent stress buster that enables the brain to recharge itself and remain at its optimal efficiency. Whether kids play cricket or an instrument, dance or paint, time spent in recreational activities has tremendous physical, mental, and social benefits.

Case in point: A mother from New Delhi came to me with her daughter who she claimed was intelligent, but unusually sluggish and not scoring particularly well on her exams. After asking her a few questions, I discovered that after the girl got home from school daily, she would go to three separate tuitions. She would then eat dinner and study late into the night. 'Don't you ever play?' I asked. 'Not really,' she replied, 'who's got time?' I eventually convinced the mother that her daughter was simply studying too much and that her brain was not getting a chance to rest enough. Because she was fond of painting and badminton, I had her cut down on two hours of her tuition and study time. As a result, her energy levels rose significantly—and so did her marks.

Identify and celebrate their uniqueness

I want to finish off with the same point I made at the start. Never forget that all children possess unique attributes that make them special. Take time to find out what these are, and help them find a niche in school where they can excel rather than expect them to become toppers in all subjects. Celebrate their successes and help them play to their strengths, as this will empower their self-esteem and fuel their motivation. Take for example a couple who came to me with their 14 year old son who was losing interest in studies and in risk of failing. His parents were baffled because their son displayed obvious signs of intelligence with his voracious appetite for reading the latest books on the environment. I noticed that a look of contempt came

over the boy's face when the father started complaining about how he had begun to do badly in some subjects. But when I began asking the boy about his interest in nature and wildlife, he suddenly became animated and he spoke very articulately about environmental conservation. I eventually convinced his parents to feed his interests, explaining that it would indirectly boost his concentration, studiousness and ultimately, his marks. I was right. And though he didn't necessarily become a topper, he definitely rose far out of the danger zone. This same logic applies to the process of career selection.

Source: /Economic Times/22 January 2010

Maintain status quo on 44 deemed universities: SC to Centre

The Supreme Court on Monday directed the Union Government to maintain status quo on the 44 deemed universities facing de-recognition for not being up to the standard.

A bench of Justices Dalveer Bhandari and A K Patnaik passed the order despite the Government's assurance that no follow-up action would be taken against these institutions without the consent of the court.

The apex court also issued notices to all the 44 deemed universities as also their parent varsities to file their response on the Government's decision to de-recognise them.

Amidst strong protests from the aggrieved universities on the Government's decision, the apex court assured them that it would not pass any adverse order without hearing them as the issue not only involved several institutions but also two lakh students.

It further directed the Union Government to place on record the reports of the Review Committee and the Task Force on the basis of which the Human Resource Development Ministry had decided to crack the whip on the 44 universities.

It also asked the UGC to place its earlier report on the basis of which the Ministry had accorded deemed status to these institutions.

Source: New Delhi /indian express/25 January 2010

No deemed university student will suffer: Sibal

HRD minister Kapil Sibal on Tuesday sought to allay the anxiety of students enrolled in 44 deemed universities on the brink of being de-recognised, by promising that no student will be left in the lurch.

The ministry's task force has clearly delineated the roadmap for students in these institutions ensuring that no one suffers, he said.

The assurance notwithstanding, many questions linger. For instance, HRD ministry's affidavit in the Supreme Court clearly states that even if the institutions concerned lose deemed university status, they remain colleges and will be affiliated to state universities. In case of medical/dental colleges, they will seek affiliation from state medical universities.

Asked what if state governments refused to give affiliation, sources said the ministry would seek a relevant directive from the Supreme Court. "There are other methods also," they said.

The HRD ministry, however, is confident that it has a foolproof case in the apex court. Highly placed sources said the 44 deemed universities should not hope that a clean chit by UGC's review committee (separate from the HRD ministry's panel) can help them challenge the recommendation seeking removal of `deemed' status.

Sources said under the UGC Act, the HRD ministry may or may not accept UGC's recommendations. "Anyway, UGC had reviewed only a few parameters of these institutions whereas the HRD ministry's review committee looked into the complete picture. It cannot be challenged," a highly placed source said.

Another important issue pertains to what happens to institutions that got deemed status by virtue of starting courses in new areas of knowledge like nano technology. They were called deemed university in `de novo' category. Quizzed about it, sources said, "Their deemed status will be withdrawn precisely because they were not teaching new areas of knowledge and were instead focussing on regular medical and engineering courses. Students of these institutions will also become part of state universities."

While they did not elaborate, what is clearly implied is that students who got enrolled for these niche disciplines can at best hope to pass out as regular graduates.

The degrees of those enrolled with "deemed universities" now staring at de-recognition will be of the institutions they may get attached to in future. "Students will eventually get the degree from the new university," sources maintained.

Those who have already passed out from the "universities" in question need not worry. "They will not be affected because the deemed status was not taken away then," sources said.

But the ministry is keen that the institutions are not able to give back-dated certificates. Sources said the ministry had anticipated such a possibility and, therefore, the review committee's questionnaire had asked each institute to furnish details of past and present students. "Back-dated degrees cannot be given now," a source said.

Meanwhile, HRD ministry is waiting for the next hearing in Supreme Court on January 25 before it starts issuing notices to these 44 deemed universities.

Source: New Delhi /times of india/20 January 2010

PM for 100 Percent Literacy in India

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh Saturday called for a sharp increase in the enrollment of girls in schools to make them equal citizens and said every child should be made

literate over the next decade with the aim of achieving 100 percent literacy.

'I wish to see every child in our country becoming literate over the next decade. We must aim for 100 percent literacy across India. I would also like to see that every child has access to school education within reasonable distance from his or her home.

'When I was young I had to walk miles to go to school. This should not be the lot of our children in future,' the prime minister said addressing the 150th anniversary celebrations of St. Xavier's Collegiate School here.

Manmohan Singh said every girl child should get the opportunity to fulfill her potential.

'I would like to see a sharp increase in the enrollment of the girl child in schools. Every girl child should have the opportunity to fulfill her potential and become equal citizens of our great republic.'

He said the central government has made universal access to education one of the cornerstones of inclusive growth.

'Our government has made universal access to education one of the corner stones of our strategy of inclusive growth. I am delighted to learn that the rate of literacy has been going up significantly in the past few years. I am also happy to learn that enrollment ratios are rising and dropout rates are falling,' he said.

Saying his government has steeply increased public investment in education, the prime minister urged the states to ensure that the money is well spent.

'Our government has raised public investment in education very steeply. Never before has so much money been invested in education. I urge every state government to ensure that this money is well spent,' he said.

He spoke about the necessity of modernising the syllabi for the development of the intellect of the children.

'I also urge all those associated with school education in our country to pay special attention to the modernization of our syllabi and to the overall development of our children – their intellectual, physical, moral and social development.'

'We must pay attention to children's health, to physical education and community and national service. School education must focus on the all-round development of a child's personality.'

'I assure you that in the months to come we will pay even greater attention to the development of school education,' he added.

Source: Kolkata /vamban.com/16 January 2010

Stop talking, start acting, says Pitroda

Knowledge commission chairman Sam Pitroda on Saturday asked the Orissa government to start tightening the loose ends in higher education sector in right earnest instead of musing over problems already known.

The advisor to the prime minister on public information, infrastructure and innovation made the remarks while addressing the official task force, which since October has organized 20 consultative workshops seeking solutions to problems facing the higher education sector in the state.

"Stop talking. Start acting", Pitroda said as he spoke on the maladies the education sector facing causing frustration not only among academicians but among parents who in the present circumstances are desperate to give quality education to their children. "There have been enough conferences and debates on issues. It is time for remedial measures implemented as fast as possible", he advised. "There could be some failures here and there, which can be addressed subsequently. Don't wait any longer", he pointed out.

Pitroda felt streamlining the education sector would not pose much problem if there was political will' and cited the helpless condition of a highly knowledgeable, respectable and sincere' vice-chancellor of a university he visited recently in front of politicians. "The policy should be flexible and VCs should be given sufficient autonomy to run the universities", he said. Stating that parents in the present circumstances are ready to do anything to provide education to their children', the Orissa-born technology honcho said India is facing a big challenge in information infrastructure'. He said the prime minister had been keen on not only spreading education across the country but giving stress on quality education for which several measures are underway. In this connection he said he, Union minister Kapil Sibal and Planning Commission deputy chairman Montek Singh Ahluwalia had recently met and decided to meet the prime minister soon for the higher education Bill passed in the Parliament.

"Nothing much has yet been done in improving the education sector. It is heartening that education has been now in the national agenda, at least at discussion level", he added.

Source: Bhubaneswar /times of india/16 January 2007

Student innovations have no takers in India

Around six lakh students graduate from technical institutes every year in our country and none of their 'innovative' project works is considered worthy of a patent. There exists no arrangement in our education system to recognise these efforts.

In fact, the much-touted 'black box' being installed in cars in US and UK, mainly for insurance companies to assess genuine car accident claims, also found mention as project work by a group of students from Latur-based Women Polytechnic Institute in Maharashtra.

"Did these Latur students not deserve recognition for their idea? This project was not considered worthy enough for an auto show here," said Anil Gupta, IIM-A professor and founder of National Innovation Foundation (NIF) and Sristi.

Along with Gupta, 12 other experts gathered at the annual intellectual property rights (IPR) workshop at Ahmedabad

Management Association (AMA) and deliberated on various issues that affect patenting in our country.

Patent attorney of Klarquist Sparkman, Gregory Maurer, said that patent examiner offices in our country should be armed with large research databases to protect rights of individual inventors. "This is important as people may steal processes or technologies from public domain in one area and then apply for patents in another country."

Technical member of intellectual property appellate board (IPAB) S Chandrashekhar, added, "We have managed to upload almost two lakh innovations on our website for access for the public. Today one of our prime concerns is the process of 'evergreening' where major pharmaceutical companies by making minor changes in their present products apply for patents."

However, Gupta believed that a major shift in mindset would be required to bring about the change. "Imagine in terms of castor seeds or a physillium seed, which has thousands of uses in traditional medicines, drug industry and herbal market, India has just two patents in physillium while the US has 328 and in comparison to five patents in castor seeds with India, there are 399 patents with individuals and other countries. Is this not shameful?"

Speaking of innovations, Gupta said the poor may be at the bottom of the economic pyramid but are top of the "innovation" pyramid. "The grass-root innovations are frugal in technology, hence they are affordable, energy efficient and accessible — where else can you find this talent pool. In fact, UGC and AICTE should ban educational institutions those borrow agricultural innovations of poor farmers and label them as their innovations."

Source: Ahmedabad /times of india/25 January 2010

Student Speak: A waste concern

Setu Goyal, an M.Tech student in renewable energy, engineering and management at TERI University, Delhi, elaborates on the concerns facing the waste management sector

In our country, waste management has become a serious problem owing to the lack of stringency in terms of implementation of policies and laws. The Industrial Revolution has also contributed its part. Waste management hazards not only have serious repercussions on the environment but create numerous problems for human beings as well. With this understanding, coupled with a keen interest for the issues of environmental sciences, I started searching for some interesting programmes in various universities across the world, after completing my graduation in biotechnology from ICFAI University.

When I came across this course in renewable energy, engineering and management at TERI University, I knew it was exactly what I was looking for. It is an interdisciplinary course with a batch of 20 students from varied backgrounds ranging from biotechnology, electrical engineering, mechanical engineering and environmental engineering.

The objective of this course is to introduce students to non-conventional sources of energy like wind, solar, hydropower, bio-fuels and waste to balance energy conversion. Apart from these, there is another course on energy economics and energy modeling, which would enable us —the future engineers — to formulate or validate the economics of a renewable energy-based power plant.

I plan to do my major in waste utilisation and bio-fuels. Since India is mainly an agrarian economy, there is a huge potential and scope for research in this area. This course equips one to seek employment in solar energy (with the 96,000 crore solar mission recently launched in India, prospects in this field look promising), wind energy (companies like Suzlon are expanding on a largescale) and bioenergy (a large number of consultancy companies are mushrooming in India to support the ongoing projects in different parts of the world, especially the US and the South-East Asia) sectors. One can even explore the possibility of becoming an energy auditor.

Source: /times of india/25 January 2010

The Rot in our colleges

The crisis extends beyond deemed universities to the entire university system. Since universities are unable to enforce standards on colleges, the best course would be to allow more colleges to be autonomous, so that their faculty is answerable for performance.

Deemed university students staging a protest…What is needed is not more colleges, but better colleges. It has been a turbulent fortnight for Indian education. Forty-four deemed universities will be derecognised. The decision has been widely welcomed (though I know of a couple of instances where the move does not seem appropriate).

It is no great secret that deemed universities have come about as a result of crores of rupees being paid to secure that status. Such institutions should undoubtedly be punished. However, the government need not have gone about the way it has. There is not much evidence of a serious investigation. The simple precaution of giving a show-cause notice seems to have been overlooked.

Some deemed the government, whose credentials are at best doubtful, has also sponsored universities. They have, however, escaped the axe. People in Tamil Nadu are familiar with the story of Manu Neeti Cholan who enforced the law on his own son. Today's governments do not fall in that category.

Revamp Universities

The mess has come about because the government has asked the wrong question. Instead of looking into what is wrong with deemed universities, it should have enquired into what is wrong with university education. As a result of this flawed approach, many universities which do not deserve to be described as such continue to flourish, whereas others, superior in discipline and in quality of instruction, have been dubbed as incompetent.

On a personal note, my wife was a UGC nominee to enquire into the accreditation of a college in Rajasthan. That college had given degrees in chemistry for several years without having a single teacher to teach that subject. The labs had been condemned as unfit and had not been repaired. The person who received her in the morning had vanished by the evening because he had been transferred to a "better" college and he wanted to join before the order could be revised — by political pressure. That university remains accredited; that college "functions".

Then, we have a problem, peculiar to our country, of "affiliated colleges". We have over 20,000 colleges in the country. Very few of them are worthy of being part of a university. Admittedly, we cannot close them all. The least we can do is to relieve universities from the responsibility of carrying them on their rolls and suffering on their behalf.

Affiliated universities are a legacy of the British Raj, as a result of which our universities spend most of their energies testing students. The Controller of Examinations (or the equivalent) is a formidable figure, at times more powerful than even the Registrar or the Vice-chancellor. This kind of lopsided administrative system permits worthless colleges to flourish, with universities being unable to do anything about them.

Some years ago, a colleague of mine went as Vice-chancellor of a state university and found that it was giving more than 10 times the Ph.Ds produced by IIT Kanpur. He tried his best to bring some discipline but failed; he had to quit. In fact, in many states, the universities have no powers to decide whether to accept a college or not; that is decided by the minister.

We should abolish altogether the system of affiliated colleges, make universities run their own departments and leave the colleges to fend for themselves. Then, every college becomes autonomous, organises its own courses, conducts its examinations, and confers its own degrees.

I recollect that, 25 years ago, teachers in a major college in Chennai vehemently opposed autonomous status. They did not want to carry the additional burden of preparing their own programmes, conducting their own examinations and be answerable to themselves. I think they were wrong. Teachers should be be prepared to take full responsibility for all that happens to their students.

Critics will argue that such a free system will make matters worse. I do not think so. First, universities are unable to enforce any discipline. Second, good colleges will then have the freedom to rid themselves of the corroding influence the not-so-good ones wield in the university policy. Third, there will be greater transparency, which does not exist at present and hence pulls down good colleges.

The ideal university I can think of is one which has many disciplines — arts, sciences, engineering, medicine, law and the like. For each discipline it will have one and only one constituent college — of its own choice. All other colleges become autonomous.

Educate Poor Students

There are three beneficiaries of higher education — the student, the employer and the society at large. Ideally, the costs are shared equally between the three (that is how the IIT at Kharagpur was first envisaged). Some amount of adjustment becomes necessary to accommodate brilliant but poor students.

Under the present scheme of things, a college will choose the best combination of students to meet its costs. Therefore, a rich student is likely to be preferred over a poor, but more deserving one.

Is that fair? It has been said that India spends billions of dollars every year sending its youth abroad. Why should that amount not go to Indian colleges and be used to cross-subsidise poorer, but more competent students?

So long as the state was prepared to pay in full the cost of education, this question was irrelevant. Now that the state is unable to do so, it is a question that must be squarely addressed. Does it make sense to encourage an expensive overseas education for students of moderate ability, when they can get the same or better education at a lower cost in India, apart from the funds being used to help poorer students? Funds for overseas learning should be earmarked for really competent students who will return and contribute to the country. If Australia, the US and other countries want our youth for petty employment, they should pay for their education, not our government.

Towards Quality

Great universities such as Harvard, Columbia and Stanford follow this policy. The way we reserve admissions to backward castes, they do so for the rich. They collect money from rich parents and subsidise the more competent poor. That is why they are world class, unlike our institutions.

We forget that great universities do not require every student to be great, but their faculty must be the best. Students come and go; but the faculty stays on for decades. If we can accept backward caste students of less ability, we can also accept a similar number of rich students (of similar ability) and possibly with better justification. Autonomous colleges are our best bet, even if they are unlikely to be popular.

The government's proposal for 374 new "model" colleges will go down well with the people. Unfortunately, what we want is not more colleges, but better colleges.

Better colleges will come only when education is autonomous and an arrogant bureaucracy does not burden teachers.

Source: /thehindubusinessline/25 January 2010

Technical education in India and India's university system

Deemed to be universities appear to be the current fancy word of Central government.The reason for Ministry of HRD to suddenly go after blood of deemed to be universities is

highly baffling (though it is correct step) and does not seem to have much logic if we see situation in wider context.

In fact Indian university system as well as autonomous Institutes all is in a mess as a whole.

Indian universities are now of many types:

1. Deemed to be universities that are not duly constituted as university but taken as universities .These are some autonomous institutes or we may say, collection of departments or faculties or Institutes, like engineering, MBA, computers, pharmacy, nursing and so on coming together under one banner.
2. Recently promoted private universities by State government Acts u/s 2(f) of UGC. These universities are virtually autonomous having no control of any body.
3. State owned or Govt. universities(conventional) , the old decaying and third rate set up, largely , in India
4. Universities promoted by Central government
5. Some institutes like IITs enjoying degree granting power like universities.

To monitor these all and to fund their activities is UGC at Centre and higher education departments in States and Ministry of HRD at centre.

There are special technology related councils like Medical Council of India, AICTE and Bar Council etc to oversee quality and technology part in these institutes.

This article is specifically focused on technology fields, only.

It is unfortunate that higher technical education in India is monitored and supervised and controlled by non-technical, outdated and third rate administrators and professors from general faculties.

This has caused havoc with higher technical education in country.

There is no need to have deemed to be university status .Any Institute of excellence should convert into a proper university by applying to the State or Centre for Act to be passed.

Presently Deemed University is a route for small clusters of stand-alone institutes to become under one roof called deemed universities. The advantages are huge except for quality:

Liberty to charge huge fees as no more in control of authorities or government affiliating universities. This is main driver for rush for deemed status and Supreme Court should not over look this point. Any ordinary student or person can even see this.

Other benefits include freedom to play with syllabus, experiment and maintain substandard setups. No one to bother except periodical visit of 3-4 old state owned university set up professors for 1 or 2 days who have scant knowledge about both real research and technology and even administration. Those who do politics whole life, do not teach much and have flimsy research record assess others especially in technical field that are application oriented.

All these gang of academicians have cleverly driven out industry and consultancy/ profession people from academics by applying conditions of third rate PhDs, which have not much relevance in technical education.

The working of UGC, AICTE type organizations are always under criticism by all and these are known for politics, patronage, corruption and inefficiency. How they can oversee technical education in country and global developments is a baffling question in mind of one and all.

Time has come to liberate technical education in the country from clutches of government university professors who are not even from technology areas, directly. A national technical education council with regional sub councils as their divisions should be formed which are autonomous with only 15% government babus and professors on board. Rest should come from industry, consultancy, R&D labs and parents and eminent citizens.

Deemed university word should go anyway. There is no justification for this today in liberalised economy.

India needs a large number of new good quality technical universities with top and able administrations and experienced faculty from industry, consultancy, profession and research-all 4 areas.

Hence rules for hiring professors and their salaries should be changed to attract good and experienced industry talent. Today industry talent has been driven out by the third rate and self seeking government university professors. It is gross injustice with quality, technology ,students and nation as a whole.

All universities must have R& D division jointly managed by PhDs and industry background people. The students should be taught by both, the research background and industry background professors in atleast 50-50 ratio.

We should stop our obsession with third rate and fraudulent degrees like PhD in technical education. We know what quality of such degrees in most of India is.

There should also be a national pricing commission to regulate fees in country in all sectors of higher and technical education.

Fee revenue should be only 40-50% maximum for any institute or university and rest should come from aid, charity and project work.

The time has come to separate technical education in country from general faculties and regulate it properly to develop technology strength in India. Take it out from clutches of baniyas, babus and third rate government university professors.

I hope all well wishing citizens would force government for this model and Supreme court will take due notice of these harsh realities and not protect these deemed universities and third rate autonomous institutes which are overseen by

bodies like AICTE famous for corruption and inefficiency and also incompetence.

Will India and Indian students keep suffering and pay huge unjustified fees to the lalas ?

Source: /consumer court forum.in/31 January 2010

RESOURCE

Educating India

The Annual Status of Education Report, 2009, is out… pointing out yet again that what stands between rural girls and a good education is often basic facilities like transport and proper toilets…

Swati and Anita are two young women from rural Maharashtra. They have one thing in common. Both dropped out of school once they completed Standard VIII. They wanted to complete their schooling. Both spoke passionately to me when I met them about their desire to study. Even their parents wanted them to study further. But circumstances would not permit this.

Both girls faced an identical dilemma. While the school up to Standard VIII was in their village or close by, the high school was some distance away. The only way to go there was by the local State Transport bus. While going to school was not such a problem as it was during the day, at the end of the school day, they had to wait several hours before they could catch the bus back. If for some reason the bus was canceled, and this would happen with alarming frequency, they would have had to walk back to the village in the dark, something their parents would not contemplate. Hence, the only option was to drop out of school. In contrast, the brother of one of the girls faced no such problem. As soon as he was through with his classes, he would hitch a ride on a passing truck and make his way back. This was not an option open to the girls.

Tragic situation

What is tragic is that both these girls are as bright as any you would meet in a city like Mumbai. The only reason they will not become the engineers and doctors of the future is because there is no reliable transport linking their village to the nearest school. And theirs are not remote villages in the interior of Maharashtra. Swati lives a mere hour away from Pune. If this is the story of Swati and Anita, think how many millions more like them must be chafing at being deprived for no other reason than a safe mode of transport.

We also know that many more girls drop out even before Standard VIII for another reason: the lack of toilets in schools. The latest ASER (Annual Status of Education Report) 2009, a comprehensive survey of government and private schools in 575 out of 583 districts in India, revealed that only 50 per cent of government schools have toilets and that four out of 10 government schools did not have separate toilets for girls. Even where there were separate toilets for girls, as many as 12-15 per cent were locked and only 30-40 per cent were “usable”. I visited a school in Bihar where toilets had been constructed but within days their doors had been stolen and the toilet pans smashed making them unusable. If girls dropout when they reach adolescence, it is often for no other reason than the lack of toilet facilities. Even in a city like Mumbai, the dropout rate amongst girls attending municipal schools is markedly higher than that of boys because of the absence of toilets for them.

The annual ASER study, facilitated by the NGO Pratham, is a constant and important reminder of the state of education in this country. In 2009, ASER surveyed 16,000 villages, 300,000 households and 700,000 children. There is nothing on this scale done by an agency outside government, hence its importance. But each year, when ASER results are made public, we are reminded that education is not just about quantity, or the number of children who enroll in school — a number that is increasing — but the quality of the education these children get. And that, although it is getting better in some states, is still shockingly poor.

Conducting simple reading and mathematics tests in schools, the survey reveals that a little over half of all children in Standard V in government schools cannot read a Standard II text book. This means a 10-year-old cannot read what a seven-year-old is supposed to be able to read. What then are these children learning even if they become a statistic showing increased enrollment and attendance in schools?

Disturbing trend

Precious little, it would seem. What they cannot learn in school, they do so by paying for private tuitions. One of the more disturbing statistics in the survey reveals that one in four children in Standard I in private schools is sent for private tuitions as are 17 per cent of Standard I students in government schools. Can you imagine that? Little six-year-olds being sent for private tuition. By the time they reach Standard VIII, over one third try and learn what they are clearly not taught in school through private tutoring. An analysis of the budget of poor people would reveal what a chunk of their earnings goes into such tuitions because they hold on to the belief that education will pull them out of poverty. But given the poor quality of education in these schools, their children will never be able to compete with those with ability to pay for better quality schooling.

Fortunately, not the entire ASER report is gloom and doom. One of the brighter moments in it is the fact that in Bihar, the state considered a basket case on most counts, the dropout rate for girls in the 11-14 age group has reduced from 17.6 per cent in 2006 to 6 per cent in 2009. So Bihar must be doing something right. In fact, one of the striking sights in Bihar today is of girls on bicycles, given by the government if they clear Standard VIII, going to the nearest high school.

The desire to ensure that children get a good education runs deep in most Indian families. Parents will sacrifice and save to invest in their children's future. Even poor families, including the homeless with no secure shelter, find a way of sending their children to school. The increase in the

enrollment rate in India — 96 per cent of children between the ages of 6-14 are enrolled in school, government and private — is proof of that.

What urgently needs to be tackled is the quality of education, basic facilities like toilets and running water, and transport, particularly for girls. Even this will not suffice unless there is a notable change in the status accorded teachers who ultimately decide whether and what children learn. Instead of the inordinate amount of attention that continues to be paid to institutes of higher learning, or private institutions that promise to prepare rich children for studies abroad, something much more simple and basic can and needs to be done to educate India and Indians.

Source: /hindu.com/24 January 2010

Approval for increase in the number of Junior Research Fellowship (JRF) through CSIR-UGC National Eligibility Test (NET)

The Cabinet today approved the implementation of the proposal for increase in the number of Junior Research Fellowship (JRF) through CSIR-UGC National Eligibility Test (NET) in the country.

The main objective of the JRF-NET is to identify, through this national competitive examination, those talented students who could be enrolled for Ph.D. programmes in specific science domains, across India's scientific and academic institutions and also to identify those who fulfill the eligibility criteria for employment as lecturers across various academic institutions.

The brief details of the proposal are:

- Increase in the Junior Research Fellowship (JRF) through CSIR-UGC National Eligibility Test (NET) by two fold over the Tenth Plan period. During the Tenth Five Year Plan a total of about 6000 young students benefited by availing CSIR-JRF through NET. In the Eleventh Plan CSIR proposes to increase the number by two fold.
- The total cost of providing fellowships for about 12000 students in the Eleventh Plan is estimated at Rs.444.34 crore.
- The proposed increase in intake of JRF-NET fellowships with the attractive remuneration would help in attracting talented youth to take up scientific research as a career and help address the issues related to shortage of scientific manpower in the country.
- The biggest beneficiaries of this programme would be the University system and scientific institutions across India as they shall be able to attract bright minds for their scientific programmes/research. It will also benefit students from all over the country who are keen to take-up scientific research as a career.
- The programme will be implemented by Human Resource Development Group of the Council of Scientific & Industrial Research, which conducts National eligibility Test (NET) across the country in 25 cities and at 125 exam centers. A total of about 12000 students would be benefiting through JRF-NET in the Eleventh Five Year Plan.

Background:

Recognizing the need to identify and nurture young scientific talent who could be enrolled for Ph.d. programmes across India's scientific institutions. Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR) started in 1983 a research fellowship scheme as a national responsibility. This was a unique step to fulfil India's growing ambition to become a scientific & technological power house. In 1989, NET was recognized by UGC as pre-qualification for Lectureship and was renamed as CSIR-UGC National Eligibility Test for Junior Research Fellowship and Eligibility for Lectureship. Since 1990, NET is being conducted twice a year in the month of June and December.

NET exam is held across the country in 25 cities and at 125 exam centers in five subject areas viz. Life Sciences, Chemical Sciences, Earth Sciences, Physical Sciences and Mathematical Sciences. Selection is made through two paper system. Currently more than 1,50,000 students have been writing the NET exam each year. The CSIR-NET has established an enormous credibility in the country and it has become a bench mark for selecting candidates for pursing Ph.D. programme, appointment either as a lecturer or a project research fellow or for employment in various R&D organization all across the country.

In the recent times educationists, scientists, policy markers etc. have expressed serious concern over declining interest of students to take up careers in basic sciences. There has been an emphasis on enlarging the pool of scientific manpower to contribute towards S&T development in the country which is the reliable benchmark to become a developed nation. In order to achieve this goal focused efforts are required to be made to identify and nurture bright young students who can take up scientific research as a career. The present programme is one such focussed effort in this direction.

Source: New Delhi /pib.nic.in/21 January 2010

Initiatives for Social Security and Employment

Vocational Training with a view to creating a world-class skilled labour force is being given maximum importance. To help the youth build their career, training courses are being offered through a network of 2076 Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) and 5509 Industrial Training Centres (ITCs) located all over the country. About 1.06 million training seats are available in these ITIs / ITCs.

Action is continuing for upgradation of 100 ITIs with domestic resources, 400 ITIs with World Bank assistance and 1396 ITIs (in specific trade and skills) under Public Private Partnership (PPP) mode so as to create "Centres of Excellence (COE)" for producing multi-skilled workforce of world standard.

The 'Skill Development Initiative' Scheme was started in 2006-07 for the school drop-outs and existing workers

especially in the informal sector. Action is continuing to achieve the objective to train one million persons in first five years in Modular Employable Skills (MES) framework and thereafter one million every year.

Steps are being taken to establish 1500 new ITIs and 5000 Skill Development Centres in PPP mode in unserviced blocks of the country in order to provide training facilities in such areas.

Employment Exchanges are being upgraded on a mission mode under e-governance project. National Skill Development Policy has been formulated.

Unorganized Sector Workers

The 'Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana' in the Unorganized Sector has been made operational from 01.04.2008 to provide health insurance to all the Below Poverty Line (BPL) families, a unit of five over period of five years. The scheme envisages provision of issuance of a smart card to the beneficiary. As on 31.12.2009, 88.87 Lakh Cards have been issued. The Unorganized Workers' Social Security Act, 2008 has been enacted.

Child Labour

The Government announced a comprehensive National Policy on Child Labour in August 1987, which, inter-alia, envisaged a Project-based Action Plan for the welfare of working children in areas of high concentration of child labour. Under the action plan, National Child Labour Project (NCLP) Scheme was launched in 12 child labour endemic districts in 1988. The number of districts covered under the Scheme has been substantially enhanced to 271.

The NCLP Scheme provides for the establishment of the special schools/transitional education centers to impart non-formal/formal education, vocational training, supplementary nutrition, monthly stipend and regular health check-ups, etc. to children withdrawn from hazardous employment so as to prepare them to join mainstream schools. More than 10,000 special schools have been sanctioned with enrollment of approximately 5.00 lakh children. About 5.21 Lakh children have been mainstreamed.

For the rehabilitation of migrant and trafficked child labour, the Government has initiated a number of steps and has issued a detailed protocol for prevention, rescue, repatriation and rehabilitation of these children, to the State Governments for compliance.

Social Security

The Employees' Provident Fund Organization covers about 5.70 lakh establishments and 4.71 crore subscribers. The initiatives taken by the Corporation include the computerization plan of the organization which is being implemented with the help of NIC.

The Employees State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) covers about 1.30 crore insured persons and 5.00crore beneficiaries. The ESIC provides them insurance and health care facilities through State Government Hospitals or directly, with a network of 148 hospitals, 42 hospital Annexes and 1442 dispensaries/ISM Units. New geographical areas are also being covered.

ESIC provides social protection to the organized sector workers through a scheme called "Rajiv Gandhi Shramik Kalyan Yojana" w.e.f. 01.04.2005 under which insured persons who lose their jobs due to retrenchment, closure of factories/establishments and permanent invalidity are eligible for a monthly unemployment allowance for a maximum period of one year alongwith the medical cover.

To improve the quality of delivery of service, the ESIC is taking initiatives like Medical Education Projects and the IT Roll Out Plan.

Wages

In the Central Sphere minimum rates of wages were revised for workers in the Employment of "construction", "loading and unloading" and "non-coal mining" w.e.f 20.05.2009 in the range of Rs.120/- to Rs.240/- per day for different categories of workers.

The Payment of Wages (Nomination) Rules, 2009

In pursuance of the recommendations of the Special Task Force set up the Ministry of Women & Child Development on complete legal equality to women, the Central Government has notified the Payment of Wages (Nomination) Rules, 2009 vide Notification GSR No.882(E) dated the 29th June, 2009 defining the procedure for nomination and restricting the nomination by workers to his family members as far as applicable in exercise of powers conferred by sub-section (5) of section 26 of the Payment of Wages Act, 1936.

Bonus

The Payment of Bonus Act, 1965, which provides for payment of bonus to employees of factories and establishments employing 20 or more persons, has been amended to enhance the eligibility limit from Rs.3,500/- to Rs.10,000/- and calculation ceiling from Rs.2,500/- to Rs.3,500/-, per month while making employees employed through contractors on building operations eligible for payment of bonus under the Act. The amendments come into force w.e.f. 01.04.2006.

Legislative Measures

Amendment to the Workmen's Compensation Act, 1923 to, inter-alia, make it gender-neutral 2009 has been passed by both the Houses of the Parliament.

Amendment to the Payment of Gratuity Act, 1972 to cover teachers in educational institutions in the Act has been passed by both the Houses of the Parliament.

Reports of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Labour in respect of the amendments in the Plantation Labour Act, 1951, the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947 and the Employees' State Insurance Act, 1948 introduced in the Parliament have been received. These Reports are being examined and follow up action is being taken.

National Policy on Safety, Health and Environment at Workplace (NPSHEW) seeking to provide general guidelines for all stakeholders such as Governments,

inspection authorities, employers, research and development institutions, educational institutions for developing a safety culture and ensuring safety, health and congenial environment at all workplaces has been announced on 20th February, 2009

The National Policy on HIV / AIDS and the World of Work has been announced on 30th October, 2009.

The Labour Bureau conducted a sample survey for four quarters to assess the impact of economic slowdown on employment in India covering 2581 units pertaining to important sectors like Mines, Textiles, Metals,, Gems and Jewellery, Automobile Transport and IT/BPO etc. pertaining to October-December 2008 and January-March, April-June and July-September, 2009. It showed that there was loss of job to the extent of 0.5 million during the first quarter, which improved by 0.25 million in the second quarter, again declined by 1.31 million in the third quarter and further improved by 0.5 million in the fourth quarter.

Source: New Delhi /pib.nic.in/22 January 2010

Labour Minister asks States to constitute Social Security Boards

The Union Minister of Labour & Employment Shri Mallikarjun Kharge has called upon the State Governments to constitute State Social Security Boards and formulate rules under the Unorganized Workers' Social Security Act 2008. He was speaking at the State Labour Ministers' Conference, which began here this morning. Speaking on the occasion, the Minister said that the enactment of this Act has been a landmark achievement and the National Social Security Board formed at the Central level under this legislation, identifies suitable schemes for different sections of the unorganized workers and monitors the implementation of these schemes. He said that the States will have to play a major role in achieving the objectives by constituting State Social Security Boards at the earliest.

Mentioning the National Policy on Skill Development, Shri Kharge said that the Government is in the process of upgrading 100 Government ITIs under the domestic funding scheme and 400 Government ITIs are being upgraded through World Bank financing. 1396 ITIs are being taken up for upgradation through Public-private partnership, he said.

Shri Kharge also informed the participating Labour Ministers that the Employment Exchanges all over the country are being upgraded which will be catered by a comprehensive website having detailed information for the requirements of the employers and the skilled manpower available in various categories.

Stating that the contract workers constitute approximately 28.9% of our workforce, the Minister said that it is increasingly becoming evident that in the changing global economic scenario, contract labour has come to stay and therefore, it becomes our responsibility to see that the interests of the contract workers are protected and their exploitation is prevented.

Drawing the participants' attention towards the implementation of ESIC schemes in the States, Shri Kharge said that the ESIC has volunteered to take the responsibility of bearing the expenditure on medical care in the initial years where the scheme is being extended. 13 States/UTs have extended the provision of this Act to educational institutions and 10 States/UTs have extended the provisions to medical institutions. He said that remaining States can consider covering these categories expeditiously.

In this regard, the Minister said that rationalization and reorganization of infrastructure is one of the main areas where the corporation and the States have to jointly look into. Shortage of medical staff and equipment has proven to be a major constraint in ensuring the benefits to the insured persons. Urgent action needs to be taken by the States for improving the quality of medical care in the interest of then end-users, the Minister added.

Speaking on the occasion, the Minister of State Shri Harish Rawat said that the global economic slowdown has given us a chance to review and to re-invent our social security measures also. He said that though we have large number of Social Security Acts and programmes, some of them are very old and very effective and we have recently also taken several legislative measures to protect the interests of the working class, yet we are still behind in spending on social security measures. He said that it is time for the industry and other stakeholders to come forward to strengthen the hands of the Central and the State Governments by contributing "heavily and meaningfully" in this direction.

‘‘They talk about labour reforms but are shy in sharing the social responsibilities" Shri Rawat said and added, "the benefits of economic reforms must percolate to the workers who are the main strength of the reforms. The condition of contractual workers speaks otherwise."

Shri Rawat pointed out that though there is an act for the protection of contractual labour, but the violations are increasing day by day and there is no job security for them. Shri Rawat also said that the non-registration of trade unions is also a great area of concern, which requires our serious attention.

During the day long deliberations, the Conference discussed various labour related issues, especially the issues concerning the implementation of the Unorganized Workers' Social Security Act 2008, speedy implementation of Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY), constitution of States Social Security Boards, issues concerning Construction Workers and contractual labour etc. It reviewed the progress and constraints in implementing various schemes and programmes by various States to ensure that the benefits reach the targeted beneficiaries.

Discussions were very focused and revolved around the progress made in implementation of the various Central Schemes of the Labour Ministry. Ministers from the State Governments spoke on the specific issues concerning their

States & gave their suggestions for effective implementation.

21 Labour Ministers from various States across the country participated in the Conference.

Source: New Delhi /pib.nic.in/22 January 2010

Prime Minister's speech at St Xavier's Collegiate School, Kolkata

Following is the text of the speech by the Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh at the 150th anniversary celebrations of St Xavier's Collegiate School at Kolkata, today:

"It is a pleasure and a privilege to be here today at the 150th year celebrations of St Xavier's Kolkata. My best wishes to all the teachers, students and all those associated with this great and historic institution. I am honoured to be in these august environs that have produced many great sons of India. I am specially honoured to be here on a street named after another great icon of this city, Mother Teresa.

The Christian missionaries who came to this country chose the path of education to reach out to the hearts and minds of the Indian people. St. Xavier's was built as a result of this ennobling vision of Jesuit priests. Today it continues to what it did 150 years ago – which was to provide progressive, all round education to rich and poor, privileged and under-privileged and to children from all faiths and religions.

Institutions like St Xavier have laid the basis for English language education in Bengal. But the missionaries did not look upon learning as an elitist enterprise. They adopted an inclusive approach. St. Xavier's dominated the educational scene in Kolkata, but the fathers also built excellent schools in tribal areas

The fathers learnt Indian languages and familiarized themselves with the customs and conditions of the regions of India where they worked.

I have been told by some alumni of St Xavier's that they were taught by Belgian-Jesuit priests who were erudite not only in European culture but also in Sanskrit and Bengali.

There were also fathers who could have made original contributions in science had they not chosen to respond to the call of priesthood.

A remarkable Jesuit priest called Father Lafont was responsible for the establishment in St. Xavier's of Kolkata's first Meteorological Observatory and the first Spectroscopic Observatory. He was also the inspiration behind the work of the scientist Dr. Jagadish Chandra Bose, another towering Xaverian.

I would like to make a mention of another very distinguished old boy of St. Xaviers and a great son of India, Shri Jyoti Basu. Our thoughts and prayers are with him and I wish him a speedy recovery.

Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore studied at St. Xavier's. Even though he was not inclined towards formal studies, the story Shri Aveek Sarkar related showed that he nonetheless valued the time he spent here.

Father de Peneranda's actions left behind a deep impact on his sensitive young mind. It is teachers like Father de Peneranda and the many dedicated fathers who came after him through their personal examples instilled in their students a moral compass to guide them through their later life.

The Christian fathers helped those they taught to become well rounded and cultured human beings. Their students were given the great gift of rational thought. This I think is the most important reason why St. Xavier's has sent forth to the world so many outstanding citizens of India who have become leaders in their respective fields. India does not need blind faith. We need rational thinking and a scientific temper to counter outdated dogmas and ideologies.

The 19th century, when St Xavier's was founded, was a period of great intellectual ferment in Bengal. Many historians have called this period the Bengal Renaissance. It was also a period of profound religious introspection leading to an understanding and appreciation of various religious traditions. The coming together of European and Indian culture had made this flowering possible.

The Jesuit fathers of St Xavier's, self-consciously or otherwise, became a part of this confluence of cultures and learning. They made themselves an integral part of and reinforced India's culture of religious tolerance and secularism.

We owe these fathers a debt of gratitude and I salute them for their immense contribution to the intellectual enrichment of our people and to nation building.

Our Government has made universal access to education one of the corner stones of our strategy of inclusive growth. I am delighted to learn that the rate of literacy has been going up significantly in the past few years. I am also happy to learn that enrollment ratios are rising and drop out rates are falling.

I wish to see every child in our country becoming literate over the next decade. We must aim for 100% literacy across India. I would also like to see every child have access to school education within reasonable distance from his or her home. When I was a young boy I had to walk miles to go to school. That should not be the lot of our children in future.

Our Government has raised public investment in education very steeply. Never before has so much money been invested in education. I urge every State government to ensure that this money is well spent.

I also urge all those associated with school education in our country to pay special attention to the modernization of our syllabi and to the overall development of our children – their intellectual, physical, moral and social development.

We must pay attention to children's health, to physical education, community, and national service. School

education must focus on the all-round development of a child's personality.

Finally, let me add that I would like to see a sharp increase in the enrollment of the girl child in schools. Every girl child should have the opportunity to fulfill her potential and become equal citizens of our great Republic.

I assure you that in the months to come we will pay even greater attention to the development of school education. I wish St. Xavier's a bright and purposeful future."

Source: New Delhi /pib.nic.in/16 January 2010

Saakshar Bharat Programme

The President, Smt. Pratibha Devisingh Patil, in her address to the Joint Session of Parliament underlined the need to bridge the yawning gender gap in literacy, and declared the Government's determination to make all non-literate women literate before the end of the Eleventh Plan (2011-12). In deference to the President's emphasis on female literacy, the National Literacy Mission Authority of the Ministry of Human Resource Development conceptualized Saakshar Bharat Programme.

Saakshar Bharat, a centrally sponsored scheme of Department of School Education and Literacy (DSEL), was launched by the Prime Minister on the International Literacy Day, September 8, 2009.

Saakshar Bharat Programme (SBP) aims to further promote and strengthen Adult education. It aims at covering those who missed the opportunity of formal education earlier, and now feel a need for learning of any type, including basic literacy, basic education (equivalency to formal education), vocational education (skill development), physical and emotional development, practical arts, applied science, sports and recreation.

Within next three years, the Saakshar Bharat Programme will cover 70 million non-literate adults (60 million of them, women) in 15 plus age group in 365 low female literacy districts. This would redress the gender, social and regional disparities in literacy.

The Programmes main focus group would be women and adolescents from socio-economically disadvantaged sections like the SCs, STs, Minorities and other disadvantaged sections in rural areas of low female districts.

In SBP, all its programmes including Basic Literacy, Basic Education (linked to Equivalency with formal education system), Skill Development and Continuing Education will be taken up in continuum, without break. With respect to Basic Literacy, a flexible approach would be followed, including Volunteer-based literacy center, appointment of Resident Instructors where educated Volunteers are hard to find locally, Residential Camps, part-residential and part-volunteer-based approaches.

Lok Shiksha Kendra

In each Gram Panchayat a Lok Shiksha Kendra (Adult Education Centre) would be established to take up various types of continuing education programmes. Each Adult Education Centre would be manned by two Preraks (at least one of them, woman).

The gender perspective would permeate all different core aspects of the programme including the approach, strategies, planning, management structures, TLMs, T-L processes and monitoring and evaluation. This could reinforce women empowerment.

The overall aim of the programme is to promote and strengthen adult education in the lifelong learning perspective and create a literate society. To this end, it seeks to establish adult and continuing education as a permanent and institutionalized set up parallel to formal education system. This would strengthen the right perspective for adult education.

The Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) would be the main implementing agency at the district, block and gram panchayat levels, with the State Literacy Mission Authority(SLMA) and the communities at the village level as valued stakeholders.

Especially at the Gram Panchayat level, the programme is envisioned as a programme of, for and by the people, under the auspices of the village panchayat. All stakeholders, especially at the grassroots level would have a due say and role in the planning and implementation of the programme. The role of National Literacy Mission Authority and State Literacy Mission Authority will be that of catalytic agencies, facilitators and resources providers.

The programme has conceptualized the Adult Education Programme in the right perspective of lifelong education, and seeks to build it as a permanent and institutionalized system, alongside and parallel to the formal education system.

This has devised a regular and uninterrupted fund flow system directly to the Panchayats through banks, cutting out the delays.

ILD Celebrations

In the International Literacy Day celebrations, for the first time, the SLMA Directors, SRC and JSS, besides their Chairpersons, Volunteer Teachers and neo-literates participated in large numbers, and heartily welcomed the launch of Saakshar Bharat.

To infuse new energy among neo-literates and literacy activists, NLM organized a special interactive programme with the President. About 100 women from States and Union Territories participated, dressed in their traditional costumes.

For the first time in India, the celebration of the International Literacy Day was combined by a week-long celebration of Adult Learners Week (ALW) in all states and districts.

In connection with the finalisation of the strategies and approach to implementation of Saakshar Bharat Programme, consultative meetings were held with representatives of State Governments, NGOs, literacy practioners, administrators, SRCs, universities, etc. More than 20 Task Forces under SRCs, & NLMA Members

elaborated strategies and implementation modalities on various core aspects of Saakshar Bharat programme.

The Programme was launched on October 1, 2009. In view of the changes envisaged the strategy and approach of the programme, with special focus on women, designing a state of the art teaching-learning materials became imperative. Accordingly, based on national consultations involving experts, state-specific primers were prepared by each SRC, and kept in readiness for printing and distribution in time for the programme.

Capacity Building of Key Resource personnel is the first step for launching the cascade training strategy for a programme like Saakshar Bharat, which deploys a massive number of Volunteer Literacy Educators – something of the order of seven million for a target of 70 million non-literates. All the SRCs have undertaken one or two rounds of capacity building of the key resource personnel and in some cases, even the orientation of the PRI members.

In the adult education system envisaged in lifelong learning perspective, Equivalency Programme is one of the salient facets, whereby equivalency with formal education system in respect of III, V, VIII levels and even beyond is planned. Democratisation of education system and increase in the educational level, through the aegis of adult education system is on anvil, which would significantly raise the educational level of Gram Panchayat. For the first time, authentication and certification of prior knowledge of adults is planned.

Jan Shikshar Sansthans

The Jan Shikshar Sansthans (JSSs) are a unique creation of the Government with the challenging mandate of providing vocational skills to non-literates, neo-literates and rudimentary level education. The priority groups of Jan Shikshar Sansthans are women, SCs, STs, Minorities and also other socio-economically backward sections of the society. For the first time, a proforma was developed that could, at glance, reveal details of courses, beneficiaries, duration, programme expenditure, etc. This made possible the review of the progress in Annual Action Plan.

In adult education, motivation and mobilization of the non-literates as well as volunteers are critical for their participation. The changed context of rural areas, with the penetration of IT, ICT, including radio, TV, mobiles, would call for changes in strategy of motivation and mobilization. Thus, the Strategy Communication Group for implementation zeroed in intensive use of Radio and outdoor print message medium for launching environment building for Saakshar Bharat programme. For the next phase, a combination of the traditional environment building based on kalajathas as the dominant mode with the modern technology-based communication strategy could be used.

Based on the broad National curricular Framework for Adult Education, Primers for Saakshar Bharat programme have been prepared by the SRCs in respect of various languages. These have been scrutinized at national level review meetings by the Quality Assurance Committee. After receiving the Quality Assurance Certificate, these primers could carry NLM logo and would be eligible for printing and distribution.

The National Institute of Rural Development, Hyderabad, has been commissioned by NLMA to conceptualize and articulate the strategy for the Orientation of the PRI members and its administrative functionaries at panchayat, block and district levels. NIRD, in collaboration with SIRDs and their district counterparts, have worked out the strategy for PRIs orientation, to be completed by March 2010.

The NLMA has taken up, in a series of four-five states, the orientation of the SLMAs, to launch Saakshar Bharat programmes in their respective states. In such orientations, the SLMA members, State Education Secretaries and Directors of Adult Education would receive orientation on different core aspects of Saakshar Bharat programmes.

Source: New Delhi /pib.nic.in/22 January 2010

Scheme of setting up of 374 Model Colleges in Districts having Gross Enrollment Ratio for higher education less than the national GER

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs today approved the introduction of a new Scheme to provide central assistance for setting up of a model degree college in each of the identified 374 educationally backward districts where Gross enrollment Ratio (GER) for higher education is less than the national GER.

Point-wise details:

(a)The Central Government shall provide assistance to the extent of one third of the capital cost for establishment of each college, limited to Rs.2.67 crore. For Special Category States, the Central share shall be 50% of the capital cost limited to Rs.4 crore for each college.

(b)The land shall be provided free of cost by the State Governments. The balance amount of the capital cost, and the recurring cost of running these new colleges shall be met by the concerned State Governments.

(c)During the remaining period of the 11th Five Year Plan, assistance shall be provided for establishing 200 model colleges in identified districts, with priority being given to special category states and districts having concentration of weaker sections and minorities as well as other districts in Schedule V and Schedule VI areas.

(d)The Scheme will have prospective effect and will be applicable to those colleges where admissions commence after 21.01.2010.

(e)A clear Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) will be signed with each State Government before any release of funds is made.

(f)The Scheme shall be implemented both through the University Grants commission (which can release

funds to the concerned affiliating university for establishment of the college as its constituent college) and also alternatively by way of direct release of funds by the Ministry of Human Resource Development to the concerned State Government, which may like to set up the college either as an affiliated or a constituent college.

The total funds requirements will be Rs.2992 crore (for 374 colleges @ Rs.8 crore per college), and the Central share shall be about Rs.1079 crore. During the remaining period by the XI Plan it is proposed to provide Central assistance for 200 colleges for which the financial requirement (central share) shall be limited to about Rs.615.13 crore.

Assuming that the average number of students in a college is 500, the total number of students who would be enrolled in the 374 colleges, shall be about 1.87 lakh.

This is a new Scheme meant exclusively for students in educationally backward districts, aspiring for higher education. The Scheme shall help in increasing the GER in educationally backward districts.

The Scheme will be publicized among the State Governments immediately for inviting proposals from the States. All the identified 374 higher educationally backward districts in the country where the GER is less than the national GER shall be covered.

Background:

In his Independence Speech on 15th August 2007, the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India had announced, inter alia, that "We will also ensure that adequate numbers of colleges are set up across the country, especially in districts where enrollment levels are low. We will help States set up colleges in 370 such districts". The XI Five Year Plan document as approved by the National Development Council envisages, among other things, that 370 new Degree Colleges will be established in Districts with low Gross enrollment Ratio based on careful selection.

Source: New Delhi /pib.nic.in/21 January 2010

Shri Kapil Sibal calls for Quality in Education

Inaugurates conference of state education secretaries: NCTE portal launched

Quality should be at the forefront of the education system, and access to quality education must be available for all. The nation cannot move forward with good education being limited to an elite class of people. This was stated by the Union Minister for Human Resource Development, Shri Kapil Sibal, while inaugurating a conference of State Education Secretaries, to discuss Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and school education here today. The Minister, while complimenting the efforts of the SSA in reaching out to 99 per cent habitations in the country, cautioned that as certain recently published reports on the state of education in the country had indicated, the quality of education and high drop out rates continue to be a cause of concern.

The HRD Minister suggested that at the level of the nation, we need a core curriculum in Science, Commerce and Maths. In the future, he added, for Humanities also a core curriculum could be mulled and regional/state specific diversities can be part of the syllabus as core plus. He underlined that the quality of teachers will need to be improved and the RTE also has specific clauses in this regard. He also called upon the officers presents to ensure girl child has equal access to education.

Shri Sibal inaugurated the 'NCTE Portal' during the Conference and released the 'User-Manual' of the NCTE Portal to be used by the officers of NCTE and other stake holders. The Portal would provide various services, including on-line application for recognition of teacher education institutions, on-line submission of appeals, on-line registration of teacher education institutions, teacher educators and teacher trainees, and electronic processing of applications submitted on-line through MIS-integration. He welcomed this endeavour of the National Council for Teacher Educational (NCTE) as a major step forward in e-Governance and transparency in the education sector.

Source: New Delhi /pib.nic.in/28 January 2010

Shri Kapil Sibal releases 'Elementary Education in India: progress report towards UEE

enrollment at Primary & Upper Primary Level Increases to 134.38 Million in 2008-09 from 101.16 Million in 2002-03

Shri Kapil Sibal, Union Minister for Human Resource Development, released, here today, the 'DISE Flash Statistics-2008-09' which is a progress report towards Universalisation of Elementary Education in India. This report has been prepared by the National University of Educational Planning and Administration(NEUPA). NUEPA has created a comprehensive database on elementary education in India known as District Information System for Education (DISE). The project covers both primary and upper primary schools/sections of all the districts of the country. The MIS Units are now operational both at the district and state levels and are providing vital information for policy formulation and preparation of district elementary education plans. DISE has drastically reduced the time-lag in the availability of educational statistics which is now down from 7-8 years to less than a year at the national level and only a few months at the district and state levels.

To further improve the quality of data, it has now been made mandatory for all the states to check the data on five percent random sample basis through an independent agency each year. States are advised to initiate corrective measures in the light of the findings of sample checking of data.

DISE 2008-09: School-Based Indicators

With the improved coverage, the number of schools/sections imparting elementary education dealt with under DISE increased many-fold. From 8,53,601 schools in 2002-03, their number has increased to 11,96,663 schools in 2006-07 and further to 12,50,775 schools in 2007-08. In

the current year, 2008-09, as many as 12,85,576 schools imparting elementary education across 633 districts of the country are covered under DISE.

Of the total schools, about 87.30 percent schools are located in the rural areas. During the same period, the number of primary schools increased from 6,01,866 to 8,09,108. Category-wise distribution of schools reveals that majority of the schools (62.94 percent) are independent primary schools. The increase in the number of schools is also reflected in the ratio of primary to upper primary schools/sections which clearly shows the impact of *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* under which a large number of schools have been opened in the recent past. This ratio for the year 2008-09 is one upper primary school/section for every set of 2.27 primary schools/sections compared to 2.45 in 2006-07 and 2.42 schools/sections in 2007-08. Most of the states have the ratio equivalent to almost two, all of which suggests that by and large schooling facilities have been created and are available across the country. Despite significant improvement in the ratio, there are a few states, such as Arunachal Pradesh (4.16) and West Bengal (5.48), where the ratio still needs to be improved significantly.

72,886 and 1,77,034 schools covered in 2008-09 were respectively being managed by the Private Aided and Private Unaided managements. DISE data also suggests that majority of the private schools are un-aided schools (70.84 percent). The percentage of government and government aided schools is as high as 86.19 which show that about ninety out of every hundred schools imparting elementary education in the country are funded by the Government.

DISE 2008-09: Facility Indicators

Like number of schools, instructional rooms and ratio of primary to upper primary sections/schools, facilities in schools have also improved significantly, which is true for physical, ancillary and teaching-learning facilities. Availability of basic facilities in schools not only attracts more children to schools but also help in improving retention rate.

The preliminary analysis of a select few indicators suggests significant improvement in all facility indicators. As of 30th September 2008, as many as 1,26,335 primary and 48,994 upper primary schools/sections have been opened under the Government managements since the inception of SSA. 2,22,534 schools have been opened which is about 17.32 percent of the total schools in 2008-09 in the country and more than 90 percent of these new schools have school buildings. Jharkhand has opened as many as 16,102 primary schools/sections which is the highest among all the States and UTs of the country. On the other hand, Uttar Pradesh opened the highest number of Upper Primary schools/sections (21,042 schools/sections). Opening of new schools is also reflected in the ratio of Primary to Upper Primary schools/sections which stood at 2.27 in 2008-09 compared to 2.42 Primary schools/sections per Upper Primary school/section. The improvement in average number of classrooms is also reflected in the improvement in student-classroom ratio which has improved to 33 students per classroom in 2008-09 from 35 students in the previous year.

About 88 percent of the 1.29 million schools that impart elementary education in the country now have *drinking water facility* in school. All the schools in Chandigarh, Daman and Diu, Delhi, Lakshadweep, and Tamil Nadu have been provided with the drinking water facility in the school.

About 67 percent schools in the country now have access to *common toilets* in 2008-09 compared to only 62.67 percent in the previous year all which suggests that the facility was extended to a large number of additional schools during the intermediary years i.e. 2007-08 to 2008-09. More than 50 percent of total 1.29 million schools now have *girl's toilet* compared to 50.55 percent in the previous year i.e. 2007-08.

14 percent schools have *computer* in schools with percentage of such schools as high as 85.88 percent in Chandigarh, 85.84 percent in Delhi, 79.93 percent in Kerala and 89.74 percent in Lakshadweep compared to only 0.68 percent in Bihar and 3.59 percent such schools in Uttar Pradesh. On the other hand, it has been observed that 40.39 percent schools in 2008-09 have *ramp* in school and 43.33 percent Government and Aided schools, a *kitchen-shed* in the school premises.

DISE 2008-09: Enrollment-Based Indicators

With the increased coverage of schools under DISE, *enrollment* both at the primary and upper primary level of education has also increased significantly. The enrollment increased from 101.16 million in 2002-03 to 131.85 million in 2006-07 and further to 134.38 million in 2008-09. The *GER* at primary level, based on the DISE data is estimated to be 115.31 percent, corresponding to 98.59 percent *NER.* A few states are near achieving the goal of universal primary enrollment. Over a period of time, *enrollment* in upper primary classes has also shown consistent increase. From a low of 37.72 million in 2004-05, it has increased to 53.35 million in 2008-09 (GER 73.74 percent).

Gender Parity Index (GPI) and percentage of girls' enrollment in primary and upper primary classes reveal that there is consistent improvement both in GPI and girls' share in enrollment. The average of 633 districts in 2008-09 indicates a GPI of 0.94 in primary classes and 0.91 in case of upper primary classes.

At the primary level, the share of *SC and ST enrollment* with respect to total enrollment works out to 19.94 and 11.68 percent respectively. Notably, at all levels, government schools are the main providers of educational needs of both SC and ST children. The share of OBC enrollment in the elementary classes is 42.26 percent.

One of the essential requirements to achieve UEE is to retain students in the education system. The *apparent survival rate* (to Grade V) improved to 76 percent in 2008-

09. This is also reflected in *retention rate* at primary level which is estimated to be 75 percent.

With improvement in the number of schools, facilities in schools and enrollment, the *dropout rate* for cohort 2007-08 indicates an average rate of 8.02 percent in primary grades. One of the other important indicators that are essential to achieve UEE is high *transition from primary level to upper primary level* of education. It has improved to 82.84 percent in 2008-09 from 81.13 percent in 2007-08.

Learner's achievement is considered as one of the important indicators of quality of education. Examination results at the terminal grades is a proxy indicator of learner's achievement. About 50 percent boys and 51 percent girls passed Grade IV/V with a score of 60 percent and above, compared to 43 percent boys and 44 percent girls scoring 60 percent and above marks in Grade VII/VIII; the same has shown improvement over the previous year.

DISE 2008-09: MUSLIM enrollment

The analysis of data suggests improvement in participation of Muslim Minority children in elementary education programmes. The data which has been received from *1.29 million* recognised schools imparting elementary education from across *633 districts* spread over *35 States and Union Territories* of the country reveals a total enrollment of *14.83 million* Muslim children in Primary classes in 2008-09 which is *11.03 percent* of total *134.38 million* enrollment (Total) in Primary (I to V) classes. During the previous year, the same was 10.49 percent and in 2006-07, it was 9.39 percent. Of the total Muslim enrollment in Primary classes, the percentage of Muslim girls is *48.93,* which is quite similar to the share of girls in overall Primary enrollment (48.38 percent). The highest percentage of Muslim enrollment is observed in Lakshadweep UT (99.73 percent) which is because of the fact that the percentage of Muslim population to total population in the UT in 2001 was as high as 95.47 percent.

Like enrollment in Primary classes, percentage of Muslim enrollment in *Upper Primary classes* has also improved to *9.13 percent* in 2008-09 from 8.54 percent in 2007-08 and 7.52 percent in 2006-07. Of the total *53.35 million enrollment in Upper Primary classes* in the country in 2008-09, *Muslim enrollment is 4.87 million* and the percentage of Muslim girls to total Muslim enrollment in Upper Primary classes is *50.03 percent* which is above the national average of 47.58 percent girls enrollment in Upper Primary classes.

The data also reveals a share of 10.49 percent (Muslim enrollment) in Elementary classes (I to VIII) of which 49.20 percent are the Muslim girls (to total Muslim enrollment).

The enrollment data for the year 2008-09 also reveals that there are certain pockets in the country, which has got high percentage of Muslim enrollment. There are about *87,690 schools,* which has got more than *25 percent Muslim enrollment* (to total enrollment in elementary classes) which is 6.84 percent of the total schools that impart elementary education in the country. Similarly, *62,534 (4.88 percent) schools* have above 50 percent Muslim enrollment as compared to 48,946 schools (3.82 percent) having 75 percent and above and 41,300 schools (3.22 percent) even having a share of 90 and above Muslim enrollment to total enrollment.

Because of the high percent share of Muslim population to total population in the state, *12 districts of Jammu and Kashmir* have got *above 90 percent Muslim enrollment* in 2008-09 in Primary classes which is also true for enrollment in Upper Primary classes. On the other hand, 25 districts in the country have more than 50 percent Muslim enrollment in Primary classes in 2008-09 compared to 20 such districts in case of Upper Primary enrollment. 15 districts of Jammu and Kashmir, 1 district each from Bihar, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Lakshadweep and Kerala and 5 districts of Assam have more than 50 percent Muslim enrollment in Primary classes.

DISE 2008-09: Teacher-Related Indicators

Availability of teachers in schools is an important variable for quality education. The total number of teachers in 2008-09 suggests that about 5.79 million teachers are engaged in teaching in schools imparting elementary education in the country. The data also shows appointment of a large number of teachers across the country consequent to the SSA interventions. The all-India average reveals that, on an average, there were 4.5 teachers in a school in 2008-09 that imparts elementary education compared to an average of 3.0 teachers per primary school.

All schools together had 43.46 percent female teachers. Urban areas had higher percentage of female teachers than the rural areas; this is true for all school types. Increase in the number of teachers is also reflected in the pupil-teacher ratio, which has shown consistent improvement. *PTR,* both at primary and upper primary levels, is quite comfortable (primary, 34:1 and upper primary, 31:1). There are about 538 thousand *para*-teachers, constituting 9.39 percent of the total number of teachers. About 54 percent *para*-teachers are Graduates and above. DISE data reveals that government is the main employer of both Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes teachers. The share of SC and ST teachers together in government schools is as high as 80 percent.

Source: New Delhi /pib.nic.in/22 January 2010

Technical Education imbalance among states

In order to overcome the imbalance of the number of engineering colleges amongst states, the AICTE has taken up the following initiatives:

(i) AICTE has now allowed second shift of engineering college (s) in existing engineering colleges(s) only in those States where the number of seats available in engineering colleges per lakh of population is less than all India average.

(ii) For a balanced growth of various streams of education in Engineering & Technology, the Council adopted a

policy to allow establishment of new Engineering Institutions with at least three conventional branches as a mandatory requirement in the States where the number of seats available in engineering colleges per lakh of population in more than all India average, whereas in the States where the number of seats available in engineering colleges per lakh of population is less than the all India average, no such restriction is applicable.

(iii) The Council has permitted the possession of total land area in three adjacent pieces specifically in North Eastern States and hilly areas for setting up new technical institutions.

This information was given by the Minister of State for Human Resource Development Smt. D. Purandeswari, in a written reply to a question, in the Lok Sabha today.

Source: New Delhi /pib.nic.in/16 December 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

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

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