Announcements

ASERF has instituted **Dr Stya Paul Young Educationists 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 announces the opening of Apeejay Stya University

The Apeejay Education Society, with over 40 years of Excellence in education, announces the initial opening of Apeejay Stya University at Sohna, Gurgaon. Sponsored by the Apeejay Stya Education Foundation, the University is currently located in a sprawling picturesque campus with the state-of-the-art infrastructure.

Apeejay Stya University will offer a diverse catalogue of technical, scientific, management and liberal arts courses for the academic session 2010-11. Applicants for admission will be accepted on the basis of comprehensive merit, judged by their academic excellence, their extracurricular achievements, and their utilization of the resources they have had available. As part of the application, the University would recognize a number of examination scores to establish academic excellence, including AIEEE, GMAT, SAT, and SAT II.

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

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

Inclusive education in Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan

The key objective of SSA is Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE). Three mportant aspects of UEE are access, enrolment and retention of all children in 6-14 ears of age. This goal of UEE, has further been facilitated by the Constitutional (86th mendment) Act, making free and compulsory elementary education a Fundamental right, for all the children in the age group of 6-14 years. This Amendment has given new thrust to the education of Children With Special Needs (CWSN), as without heir inclusion, the objective of UEE cannot be achieved. In-fact inclusion of one of he groups, which is extremely crucial for UEE, is perhaps that of the CWSN. Hence, ducation of CWSN is an important component of SSA.

Provisions for CWSN under SSA

SSA provides upto Rs.1200/- per child for the inclusion of disabled children, as per pecific proposal, per year. District plan for children with special needs is formulated ithin the Rs.1200/- per child norm. The interventions under SSA for inclusive education are identification, functional and formal assessment, appropriate ducational placement, preparation of Individualized Educational Plan, provision of aids and appliances, teacher training, resource support, removal of architectural arriers, research, monitoring and evaluation and a special focus on girls with special eeds. The guidelines on inclusive education in SSA are given at Annex-I.

SSA’s Policy on Inclusion

SSA ensures that every child with special needs, irrespective of the kind, category andegree of disability, is provided meaningful and quality education. Hence, SSA has dopted a zero rejection policy. This means that no child having special needs should be deprived of the right to education and taught in an environment, which best, uited to his/her is learning needs. These include special schools, EGS, AIE or even come-based education.

The major thrust of SSA is on inclusion or mainstreaming CWSN into the fabric of normal elementary schooling. Experiences of programmes like DPEP and various research findings have shown that inclusion is best determined by the individual eeds of the child. Most children with special needs can be enrolled and retained in regular schools if adequate resource support is provided to them, whereas there are others who might have to be provided some kind of pre-integration programmes, before they can be mainstreamed in a classroom. There might also be still some WSN with severe profound disabilities, who would require an educational programme and intensive specialized support completely beyond the purview and scope of a formal school in the current situation.

Thus, SSA has adopted a more expansive and a broad-based understanding of the concept of inclusion, wherein a multioption model of educating CWSN is being implemented. The dual objective of embracing this model is to bring more CWSN under the umbrella of SSA and to provide to CWSN appropriate need based skills, be it vocational, functional literacy or simply activities of daily living. Further, an attempt is being made to provide these skills in the most appropriate learning environment.

Efforts so far

The implementation of this multi-option model of inclusion in SSA has been made possible due to the flexibility offered to each State by the programme. Although most SSA States have dentified and enrolled CWSN in schools, they differ in the approaches and strategies adopted to achieve the ultimate objective of inclusion. States like A.P., Bihar, Madhya-Pradesh, unjab, Rajasthan and U.P. have conducted residential bridge courses for CWSN with the main objective of preparing CWSN for schools, thereby endeavouring better quality inclusion for them. Whereas Rajasthan is conducting these bridge courses entirely through NGOs, U.P is onducting them through the resource teachers especially recruited by the District SSA Societies for this purpose. Andhra- Pradesh has adopted a mixed model, with some districts conducting these courses through NGOs and others through the District SSA Societies. Besides this AIE model, 11 States are also covering CWSN through the EGS. So far in SSA, 112033 CWSN are being covered through AIE/EGS in 17 States. Another practice adopted by SSA States (21 States so far) is that of the home-based education for children with severe-profound disabilities with the objective of either preparing CWSN for schools or for life by imparting to them basic living skills. Again States have adopted different ways to provide home-based support to CWSN. States like Himachal-Pradesh and Uttarakhand are using NGOs for this purpose, whereas States like Haryana and Kerala have appointed resource teachers who visit the homes of CWSN to provide them basic functional skills. Still other States like Tamil- Nadu are using special schools as resource centers to provide short-time or part-time help to individual children with special needs and their parents. Parental counseling and vocational training are two important aspects of the entire home-based instruction programme. Through home-based education, SSA has been able to cover 77140 CWSN. A notable feature of this programme has been an increased and a sustainable school- community linkage by actively involving parents in the educational process of their CWSN.

No matter what the educational setting, it is widely accepted that there can be no inclusion of CWSN without adequate resource support. This aspect has been taken care of in SSA mainly through NGOs, inclusive education resource teachers (IERTs), volunteers or by imparting long-term training to regular teachers on inclusion. States like Haryana have opened model inclusive schools in every block and equipped them with all possible facilities (like transport, equipment for physio- therapy, occupational therapy, resource teachers etc.) mainly to provide all kinds of support services, including remedial teaching to CWSN.

22 States have appointed 6678 resource teachers and 687 NGOs are involved in the IE programme in 28 States. An

important and unique facet of this involvement is the range of activities that the NGOs have undertaken in the States for IE. These activities vary from planning for inclusion as in West- Bengal, to implementation and monitoring of IE, like in Tamil- Nadu. Other States have engaged NGOs for designing and initiating innovative rogrammes. These include themebased camps in Orissa and development of low-cost/ no- cost Simulation Park for social inclusion of CWSN in every BRC of Tamil- Nadu to training of Key Resource Persons from the Families of CWSN in West-Bengal and preparation of adapted TLM for CWSN in Karnataka.

Two additional forms of resource support, complimentary to each other, being provided to CWSN are through assistive devices and barrier free access. Both of these aim enhancements of the functional capacity/ mobility of CWSN to promote their easy access to the schools. 7.11 lakh CWSN (76.44% of the CWSN requiring aids and appliances) under SSA have been provided assistive devices through various modes. Some States like Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and U.P. have converged with District Disability Rehabilitation Centers, local Red Cross, Composite Regional Centers, NGOs etc. and some States like Kerala and A.P. have made arrangements to provide the necessary equipment to CWSN through the State Government supported organizations – like A.P. Viklaangula Corporative Corporation (APVCC) and Kerala State Electronic Development Corporation (KELTRON). However, the largest provider of aids and appliances to CWSN under SSA is ALIMCO (Artificial Limb Manufacturing Corporation of India), a public sector undertaking functioning under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MoSJ&E) with which an agreement has been signed at the national level, as per which 60% of the cost of the assistive devices would be borne by MoSJ&E and 40% by the State SSA Societies. Schools are being made more schools have been made barrier-free and very focused efforts are being made by all the States to cover more schools in a phased manner.

The Outcome

These practices and innovations in SSA are no doubt leading to a gradual increased identification of CWSN. From 14.59 lakh CWSN identified in 2003-04, 30.38 laks have been dentified in 2006-07. Similarly, the enrollment of CWSN in 2006-07 has gone up to 19.97 lakh CWSN as compared to 11.71 lakh CWSN in 2003-04. More CWSN are likely to be covered this year through various interventions and strategies. The current coverage of CWSN is 21.86 lakh (71.99%).

Besides increasing the physical coverage, the expenditure on inclusive education in SSA has also shown an upward trend. From a mere 26% expenditure in 2003-04, the States have shown an overall expenditure of 65.50% on CWSN inclusion related activities in 2005-06.

The Challenges

It can be seen from the foregoing that several novel initiatives have been taken up to address the divergent needs of special children. An endeavour has also been made to develop in teachers, the necessary attitude, skills and competencies required to deal effectively with children with various special educational needs. The focus of SSA is now on reaching out to those out of school CWSN, not covered so far and developing a strategy that will ensure that every child with special needs receives continuing on site support. This perhaps is the biggest challenge of all and a crucial determinant of the success of the inclusive education programme under SSA.

However, there are a few important issues in IE that also need to be adequately addressed. These have been listed below:

➢The percentage of CWSN identified seems to be low, being only 1.54 % of the total child population in SSA in comparison to Census 2001 data, wherein 2.1% of the population has been found to have some disability. Hence, States should streamline their identification procedures

➢Retention of CWSN after their identification and enrollment should be monitored and ncouraged so that they complete the cycle of elementary education

➢States to maintain their efforts to provide more assistive devices to CWSN as 76.4% children have got the required equipment

➢Effective monitoring mechanisms should be developed by the States to assess both the quantitative and qualitative progress and problems in IE

➢Emphasis should now to be on classroom practices and teaching methods adopted by teachers for effective classroom management of CWSN

➢To ensure that every child with special needs receives continuing on site support

➢Involvement of more NGOs in the IE programme of SSA needs to be strengthened

➢Only 47.14% schools have been made barrier-free. This aspect of IE in SSA needs more focus

➢Although States have increased pace of expenditure, it needs to be further geared up.

Source:http://ssa.nic.in/childspl/May%202007%20IE%20writeup[1]..pdf please download the pdf

Source: /punarbhava.in/15 July 2010

NEWS

India-US higher education summit from July 30

Mumbai will host a three-day India-US Summit on higher education to mark the golden jubilee of the Indo-American Society, an official said.

The event will be inaugurated by Union Human Resource Development Minister Kapil Sibal July 30, president of the society V. Rangaraj told reporters.

The event is expected to create collaborations between educational institutions, and exchange programmes

involving students, faculty and researchers from both India and the US, Rangaraj said.

"Both India and the US play a significant role in today's global arena. More than 100,000 Indian students choose to go to the US to pursue higher education, but there is another almost four times the number of students who want to study in the US. Thus, there lies a huge opportunity for US educational institutions to access these students by bringing their brand of education into India," said Rangaraj.

The society helps create the ideal framework of government policy, partnerships models and access to networks that enable interactional education providers to access this huge untapped demand, he said.

The summit will offer participants opportunities to collaborate with key business, political and academic personalities at a national and international level.

It would also address important issues, particularly with regard to policy framing and regulations and international partnerships.

"The objective of this summit is to promote the Indo-American Society as a facilitator of a global hub of knowledge cultivation and talent development. It will serve as a catalyst for research and technology that will benefit students seeking higher education," Rangaraj said.

Speaking on the occasion, Mumbai Sheriff Indu Shahani, who is the convenor of the summit, said that the objective was to bring change in the current education paradigm by increasing access and enhancing quality of India-US higher education in the global economy.

"This event which is the first of its kind will bring together American and Indian universities and will contribute in a big way to strengthen co-operation between India and the United States in the field of education," she said.

During the summit to be held at Hotel Grand Hyatt, Sibal will release a white paper on higher education, prepared by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) India.

The summit will be chaired by Vijay Khole, former vice-chancellor of Mumbai University, and addressed by prominent personalities from different institutions.

Some of these include Sarah Farley, COO, Global Knowledge Initiative, Melanie Sanders-Smith, vice-president, Institute of International Education, Bala Balachandran, faculty, Kellogg School of Management, Joel M. Rodney, chancellor, Pennsylvania State University, N. Jadhav, member, Planning Commission of India, and Shahani, who is also the principal of H.R. College, Mumbai.

Source: Mumbai /education.in.msn.com/2 July 20110

Teaching tools for India from veteran US educator

He is in India with his bag of education tools. Veteran US educator Samuel W. Micklus says creativity and critical thinking are key to education as opposed to learning by rote and he is about to let Indian schools know how.

'Schools relying on rote system and learning by memorisation should actively engage students in hands-on learning so that the lessons become a lifetime's education - and not just cramming for tests,' Micklus, the New Jersey-based educator and creative think-tank, said.

Micklus is spearheading an education project in 27 countries across the world that integrates activity-based group exercises with classroom lessons.

'The students and teachers are divided into groups and are assigned creative exercises to identify problems, analyse them critically and suggest a creative solution on a range of issues from technology to performance in education,' he said.

Micklus is in India to conduct workshops in schools across the country.

He is the president of Creative Competitions Inc. and the executive director of the Odyssey of the Mind, a popular and much-feted interschool-based creative problem solving programme.

Micklus has addressed teachers and students in workshops at Ryan International School, Delhi Public School, Vasant Valley School and Sanskriti School in the capital as a start-up initiative in India.

The Odyssey of the Mind and the Creative Competitions are known for their global 'annual problem solving contest'. The competition, featured on television across the US, rewards out-of-the box and 'stylish' solutions by teams of students and teachers.

The workshops are being sponsored by the Embassy of the United States and the government of India.

'The output of a student is determined by the ability to demonstrate learning. In the examination system, knowledge is not easy to evaluate. Some students can read a book and remember it while some need to see the applications.

'We try to create a problem-solving knowhow. It can help educators identify the breakdown and the solutions of the future,' Micklus said.

The educator said he wanted to introduce teachers in India to the Odyssey of the Mind concept and discuss methods to integrate techniques with classroom exercises.

'I am in the process of starting an association in India with a couple of teams,' Micklus said.

The member schools are handed out a list of long-term problem synopses to engage students. One such problem is 'Nature Trail R' - a brain-game sponsored by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).

'The problem requires teams to design, build and drive a human-powered vehicle and a camper that will go on a camping trip. When the vehicle arrives at the camp ground, the vehicle will overcome an obstacle, clean up the environment, encounter wildlife and undergo a repair,' Micklus said.

The performance will include a character that is in or near the camper to explain the experience as part of its role.

The Odyssey has six similar performance-based tailored modules like the 'The Return to the Gift of Flight', 'Discovered Treasures', 'Column Structures' and 'Food Court and Surprise Party'.

Citing a 1958 report by E. Paul Torrance, a famous American educator, to predict their creative achievements in adult life, Micklus said: 'The comprehensive study found that highly creative students outperformed the highly intellectual ones in a ratio of 3:1.'

'India has to rethink its education mission and prepare fix doctors,' he added.

Source: Sify.com Thu, Jul 15, 2010

UGC frames code of ethics for higher education teachers

Like in schools, you might soon see parent-teacher meetings taking place in universities and colleges. The new code of professional ethics for higher education teachers by University Grants Commission (UGC) expects the latter to be in regular touch with parents of the students and meet whenever necessary to discuss their performance and growth.

The UGC, in the code of ethics released for the first time in such an exhaustive manner, has also asked teachers to work as agents of social change as it used to be in the past. Part of the new regulations fixed by the UGC for selection and promotion of teachers, the document also has guidelines as to how teachers should behave with colleagues, non-teaching staff, authorities and most importantly with students.

The UGC circular states that teachers should try to see through teachers' bodies & organisations, that institutions maintain contact with the guardians, their students, send reports of their performance to the guardians whenever necessary and meet them in meetings convened for the purpose for mutual exchange of ideas and for the benefit of the institution. It also directs teachers to respect the right and dignity of the student in expressing his/her opinion, deal justly and impartially with students regardless of their religion, caste, political, economic, social and physical characteristics, recognise the difference in aptitude and capabilities among students and strive to meet their individual needs.

Further, it calls upon the teachers to encourage students to improve their attainments, develop their personalities and at the same time contribute to community welfare, inculcate scientific outlook and respect for physical labour and ideals of democracy, patriotism and peace.

Teachers have also be told to be affectionate to the students and not behave in a vindictive manner, make themselves available to the students even beyond their class hours and aid students to develop an understanding of our national heritage and national goals. Teachers should also refrain from inciting students against other students, colleagues or administration.

As a part of their social duty, teachers have also been asked to strengthen the community's moral and intellectual life, take part in activities conducive to the progress of society, participate in community activities and shoulder responsibilities of public offices and refrain from any activity which promotes differences in the name of caste, faith, language etc.

Calling upon the teachers to lead by example, the circular states: "A teacher is constantly under the scrutiny of his students and the society at large. Therefore, every teacher should see that there is no incompatibility between his precepts and practice... teachers should manage their private affairs in a manner consistent with the dignity of the profession, express free and frank opinion as well as participate in extra-curricular activities including community service."

Teachers should, the UGC expects, treat colleagues in the same manner as they themselves wish to be treated and consider non-teaching staff as equal partners. It also asks teachers to refrain from undertaking private tuitions and coaching classes, cooperate in the formulation of policies of the institution by accepting various offices and refrain from taking leave except on unavoidable circumstances.

Source: Lucknow /Times of India/5 July 2010

2500 posts of teachers lying vacant

Several teachers described UGC's new regulations on selection/promotions and code of ethics as a 'good move'. At the same time they also demanded that in order to implement the circular in letter and spirit, the apex body should ensure that teachers get adequate facilities of teaching and research, besides appropriate teacher-student ratio.

There are around 18,000 teaching posts in 12 state universities and around 500 government and government-aided colleges in the state, of which 2,500 are vacant since long. Many colleges do not have permanent principals for last many years. The grant given by the state government only meets the salary expenditure. Colleges and universities have to use the revenue generated from self-financed courses for development work. The number of students is over 18 lakh.

"You have many colleges in Lucknow where a teacher is running the entire department single-handedly. The teacher-taught ratio is around 1:100. In such a scenario, how can you expect a teacher to pay attention to each and every student and also keep his/her research and publication profile good. The condition of colleges in small towns and backward areas is worse,'said Moulindu Mishra, president, Lucknow University associated colleges' teachers association.

Head, department of public administration, Lucknow University, Manoj Dixit said that though the UGC has brought code of ethics now, teachers have been following it since long. "We have been doing our level best in the limited resources,'he added. Officials, however, said that the state government has been given grants for various development activities under different heads but colleges do not utilise it. Teachers, however, pointed out that

budgetary allocation for higher education this year is only 0.28% of the total budget of the state.

Source: Lucknow /Times of India/5 July 2010

UGC bonanza for students in self-financing institutions

Students at self-financing universities and colleges may soon be eligible for a slew of prestigious University Grants Commission (UGC) fellowships and scholarships at present open only to students from institutions receiving government grants.

The UGC has proposed allowing students from self-financing institutions including private universities benefits like the Junior Research Fellowship (JRF) and the Post Graduate Merit Scholarship, top government officials have told **HT**.

The Indira Gandhi Scholarship for girls, the Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship for scheduled caste and scheduled tribe students, and postdoctoral fellowships for SC/ST candidates are other UGC schemes proposed to be opened up.

The proposal is likely to be accepted by the human resource development (HRD) ministry, the officials said. "We are in principle okay with this proposal. The more the number of beneficiary students, the better," a senior official said.

The HRD ministry had earlier shot down a proposal from the UGC to provide grants to private and self-financing institutions, the official said. The ministry had argued that the UGC should concentrate on funding government institutions apart from selective grants to private institutions for specific purposes.

The UGC then revised its proposal to keep out direct grants to these institutions and instead target students. Under its proposal, the UGC will reimburse private and self-financing institutions the amount of the fellowships and scholarships that are awarded to their students.

Though the HRD ministry does not have exact data, estimates suggest that tens of thousands of students today study in private and self-financing institutions. The government does not want to keep them outside the net of UGC benefits, sources said.

The move to expand the reach of UGC scholarships and fellowships to students of private and self-financing institutions also comes at a time when the private sector is being wooed by the government to invest in higher education.

Both Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and HRD minister Kapil Sibal have on more than one occasion argued that the private sector in India needs to substantially enhance its investment in education for nthe country to meet its targets in the sector.

Sibal has set a target of achieving a 30 per cent enrolment rate in higher education by 2020 – India's current enrolment rate is only 12.4 per cent.

Achieving the target will mean more than doubling the number of higher education seats available today; a task the government argues it cannot perform on its own.

Source: New Delhi /Hindustan Times/5 July 20110

UGC launches drive to replenish faculty supply

The University Grants Commission (UGC) has launched a programme to increase the supply of faculty in the country and augmenting research and teaching resources of universities. The programme called Operation 'Faculty Recharge' will create 1,000 faculty positions nationally and offers a mechanism to address the problem of lack of research and upgrade faculty resources in their science related departments.

"The supply of teachers in science education has declined and we want to catch PhDs and bring them back into research to make them potential candidates for teaching. They can then be placed with university departments and be absorbed as faculty," said UGC chairman Sukhadeo Thorat.

The operation was launched more than six months back and Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) has been selected to setup the Faculty Recharge Cell which will identify 40 professors, 80 associate professors and 80 assistant professors on an all India basis for training. In fact, to impart a distinct identity to these specially selected faculties, a prefix 'UGC' will be added in each of these categories.

Thorat explained that lack of availability of faculty besides other problems associated with hiring of faculty are often cited as causative factors of this malady.

The new inductees will be selected through a nationally conducted competitive process and placed as lecturers, readers and professors.

Source: New Delhi/business-standard.com/5 July 2010

Centre-state spat hits higher education in UP

The fate of degree colleges to be established in 41 educationally backward districts of the state with low gross enrolment ratio (GER) hangs in balance. Reason: a dispute between the Central and the state governments over sharing of expenditure. The Central government claims it to be a centrally sponsored scheme and has proposed 1:3 sharing of expenditure with the state government. But the latter wants vice-versa sharing ratio. This would have an adverse impact on the development of the state where more than half districts (total 72 districts) do not have adequate higher education facilities.

The spread of higher education in backward districts has been touted as an ambitious scheme of the UPA government with the Prime Minister Manmohan Singh himself taking keen interest. The objective is to increase enrolment ratio of India from the existing 12.4% to 17% by the end of 11th five year plan and eventually to 25% to

increase growth rate from the existing 9% to a double digit figure. The districts with enrolment ratio below 12% have been earmarked as `educationally backward districts'. The selection criterion also includes population of a district, number of colleges, geographical location (rural, urban, tribal, hilly etc.), transport facility and how many class 12 pass-outs, between 18-23 years, get access to higher education.

The non-recurring costs of establishing a college in an educationally backward district is coming to be Rs 10-12 crore, of which the Central government has agreed to give only Rs 2.67 crore and rest has to be borne by the state government. The state has also been asked to arrange 10 acre of land as per the new norms. Also, the state government will have to arrange for the recurring costs (salaries, maintenance, etc.) of the college. This is not acceptable to the state government which has asked the Central government to bear at least 90% of the expenditure. "On one hand, the Union government claims it to be a Central sponsored scheme and, on the other, it wants the state to bear all the expenses. This is not acceptable to the state," said a senior higher education officer.

However, the Central government in its circular to the states have said that ideally, the Central government should fully fund the project but in view of the past records, when Central or University Grants Commission schemes have not been able to take off properly due to lack of interest on the part of states, it has been decided that two-third of the funding will be done by the state governments. In reply, the state government has shot off letter asking the Central government to either bear 90% of expenses or leave it on the state governments to take decision on the issue. The officers in the state higher education department said they are hopeful of a `positive outcome' soon. However, sources are worried that the Central-state spat may hamper the project.

Teachers want early solution to the problem. "If the Central government wants to increase GER, it should increase the grant. The state government also needs to provide adequate facilities including required number of teachers to improve overall quality of higher education in the state," said Moulindu Mishra, president, Lucknow University Associated Colleges Teachers Association. "As per the new University Grants Commission guidelines, opening of a college requires a non-recurring investment of over Rs nine crore and Rs 50 lakh annual recurring expenditure. Since target group is poor and rural masses, state cannot charge high fees. The Centre-state share expenditure at least at the rate of 1:1," said Ramesh Tiwari, a teacher from Gorakhpur.

INFO The Criteria For Identification Of Location For A College:

- The college has to be located in an area of the district having no college in the vicinity of 10km radius. Predominantly rural location where the proportion of rural population in the area is higher than the state's average population.

- A new college, as an additional one in the vicinity, shall be permitted only if the existing college has less than 1000 students, or there is no separate college for girls in an area of 10 km radius.

- The location of the college should be such that it is accessible, i.e, reasonably well connected by transport facilities so that the college may serve a larger catchment area.

The Objective:

The expansion of higher education is to be achieved by providing increased access to higher education so as to raise the Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) by 5% by the end of 11th Plan period which amounts to increasing the enrolment from the present 10.4 million to 21 million. Even though India has attained the economic growth of over 9% of Gross Development Product in spite of the present low GER, to sustain such a rate of economic growth and to remain competitive in the globalised economy, the country needs a GER of at least 25%.

Educationally Backward Districts In UP:

Balrampur, Rampur, Shravasti, Chitrakoot, Mahoba, Sonbhadra, Kushinagar, Hathras, Bahraich, Kaushambi, Kheri, Maharajganj, Etah, Lalitpur, Barabanki, Unnao, Bijnor, Shahjahanpur, Budaun, Sant Kabir Nagar, Bulandshahr, Kannauj, Pilibhit, Sitapur, Siddharthnagar, Rae Bareli, Fatehpur, Hardoi, Gonda, Bareilly, Moradabad, Saharanpur, Farrukhabad, Muzaffarnagar, Sultanpur, Jyotiba Phule Nagar, Hamirpur, Banda, Basti, Kanpur Dehat and Mathura.

The Dismal Higher Education Scenario in UP:

Of total 72 districts, more than half, i.e, 41 districts are educationally backward. Of these, in five districts gross enrolment ratio is between 3-6%; in 18 districts it is between 6-9% and in remaining 18 between 9-12%. The national average gross enrolment ratio is 12.40%. The five districts with lowest enrolment ratio are: Balrampur (4.7%), Shravasti (4.7%), Shahjahanpur (5.3%), Lalitpur (5.6%) and Bahraich (5.8%).

Source: Lucknow /Times of India/6 July 2010

Reprieve for PhD, MPhil holders

The last meeting of Nagpur University management council has provided a reprieve to PhD/MPhil holders at least for this year. The meeting granted status quo on the vexed issue of providing equivalence to the PhD candidates with NET/SET holders.

According to reliable sources, the department of higher and technical education has written to the vice-chancellor SN Pathan asking him to end the relaxation granted to PhD/MPhil holder from appearing in the tough eligibility exams for getting permanent teaching jobs in university or affiliated colleges. The relaxation was granted as per UGC's directives of June 21 last year.

The mysterious letter by the government mentioned that it had notified all approvals given to PhD/MPhil candidates as "illegal" and these should be annulled within 10 days. However, council members led by Dr Ved Prakash Mishra lodged a strong protest and pointed out inconsistencies in the letter.

The VC then constituted a panel under Dr Mishra with Keshav Bhandarkar and Kalpana Jadhav as members to allow around 2,000 sq ft space for expansion in the campus were discussed. It was decided that the university would construct the premises and give it on lease to the bank. The council congratulated outgoing VC Pathan for successful completion of his five year tenure on a resolution moved by Dr Mishra. After Tuesday's meeting, the members will gather for a joint meeting with academic council for selection of a nominee on VC's selection panel on July 12.

Before that a meeting of standing committee for selecting members of medical and Ayurveda faculties and the academic council will be held on July 9. The term of all university bodies including academic and management councils along with senate will expire on August 31 paving way for selection of new members. Study the letter's contents. The committee will first draft a reply that will be dispatched it to the government after discussion in council.

The council also passed the proposal of starting molecular biology department from current session along with a post graduate commerce department. There was some dispute over total intake and chargeable fees for starting M.Sc. molecular biology but the members moved a resolution authorising VC to finalise those in consultation with deans. Anant Deshmukh was named coordinator for setting up the M.Com department.

Source: Nagpur /Times of India/7 July 2010

More professional courses from IGNOU

An executive MBA, eight new finishing school courses and a B.Sc. IT for international market programme are now on the list of offerings at the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU).

The courses aimed at enhancing employability of students and tailor made according to the market demands will be launched in collaboration with major IT trainer, the National Institute of Information Technology (NIIT).

The partnership agreement was signed Saturday by IGNOU Vice Chancellor V.N. Rajasekharan Pillai and NIIT Chairman Rajendra S. Pawar.

"These courses will go a way ahead in realising our aim of inclusive education. This is the decade of innovation and we have to train more than 500 million youth in India in this time," Pillai said.

"We will cater not just to our domestic needs but also to many developed countries as their population is aging," he added.

"These courses are for all students from all walks of life. Not all may score high in exams, these courses give an opportunity to them as well," said Pawar.

According to a Nasscom report, an additional 150,000 jobs are expected to be created in the financial year 2010-11.

Source: New Delhi /prokerala.com/10 July 2010

Teachers may get 2-yr leave for child care

If all goes well, the higher education female teachers in the state will get two years paid child care leave. Also, for the first time the female teachers would get 180 days adoption leaves on the lines of maternity leave in case they adopt a baby. The male teachers would also get 15 days paternity adoption leave. A provision of special casual leave to undergo sterilisation operation under family welfare programme will also be available to the teachers.

These provisions are part of the new regulations on service conditions issued by the University Grants Commission (UGC). The new regulations have increased the maternity leave from 135 days to 180 days, which can be available twice in the entire career. There is also a provision of paid leave in case of miscarriage including abortion.

However, what has been widely appreciated by the teachers is the provision of child care leave in which women teachers may be granted leave up to two years for taking care of their minor children. The leave can be availed once in the entire service period. Such a provision is already in place for Central government employees. Further, the new UGC regulations also include 180 days leave for the female teachers on adopting a child below one years of age. Male teachers would get 15 days paternity leave on adopting a child. However, the adoption leave would be allowed to childless teachers or those having only one child.

The new regulations have reduced the casual leave from 14 days to eight but have made a provision of special casual leave of ten days. This leave can be availed by the teachers for conducting examination of a university/public service commission/board of examination or other similar bodies/institutions and to inspect academic institutions attached to a statutory board. This leave would also be allowed for undergoing sterilisation operation — six days for men and 14 days for women.

Further, there is a provision of duty leave of maximum 30 days in an academic year which might be granted for attending conferences, congresses, symposia and seminars on behalf of the institution, delivering lectures in institutions and universities on invitation, working in another Indian or foreign university, any other agency, institution or organisation, when so deputed by the university among other things. Besides, study leave, sabbatical leave and earned leave will also be available as earlier.

The higher education department is studying the new regulations and has assured to take a decision soon. The move will benefit over 15,000 teachers, including over

4,000 female teachers, in UP. Teachers have welcomed the new UGC regulations on leave.

"It's good that the UGC has recognised the importance of child care in a family. Many women had to leave their careers midway for raising children. But now managing career and family would be easy for women teachers," said Sanyukta Shukla, a teacher.

"Provision for adoption leave will be of great help particularly for single women teachers who want to adopt babies. And, I hope state government will have no objection in accepting it as they do not amount to any financial burden on the state exchequer," said Moulindu Mishra, Lucknow University Associated College Teachers' Association.

Source: Lucknow /Times of India/12 July 2010

DAAD scholarships for Indian students

The German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) is offering scholarships for Indian students to pursue higher studies/research in Germany. Applicants will get a chance to collaborate in projects with German scientists, researchers and practitioners in a wide variety of fields.

Following is a brief description of the scholarships on offer in the current academic year: Master's Scholarship for Public Policy and Good Governance: Selected scholars can pursue a master's degree at one of the select German universities in the following focus areas: Public Policy, Good Governance, International Relations, Public Management, Administration, and Civil Society. Applications can be submitted online and the deadline is August 31.

Study and Research Scholarships of Today for the Megacities of Tomorrow: The focus of this scholarship is to collaborate in projects with German scientists and researchers and practitioners on drawing up and implementing solution-orientated, innovative strategies for select cities. Applications must be submitted online before September 30.

Ph.D / Sandwich / Short-Term / Post-Doc Scholarships: Students interested in pursuing a Ph.D degree at one of the German universities or research institutions can apply.

Registered Ph.D students at any Indian university or institute carrying out their research for their thesis in India and in Germany under the joint supervision of an Indian as well as a German professor are also eligible to apply for this scholarship.

Submit your application online before October 1.

Source: /hindu.com/13 July 2010

UGC's financial support for universities

The UGC has proposed to identify up to 25 universities from all over the country for financial support under its Centres with Potential for Excellence in Particular Areas (CPEPA) scheme.

The main objectives of the scheme include encouraging and facilitating the chosen departments at the selected university to work together by associating their like-minded faculty members.

The University Grants Commission (UGC) will soon come up with the list of universities being selected under its Centres with Potential for Excellence in Particular Areas (CPEPA) scheme.

July 30 is the last date for universities to apply for the scheme, which helps them receive financial support from the UGC for stepping up excellence and quality of higher education offered across the country.

The aim of the scheme is to enhance the academic and research capabilities of the selected universities in their chosen areas and/or disciplines at utmost speed.

While the earlier schemes generally aim at the development of academic/research infrastructure to improve the programmes and activities in a chosen discipline at the selected university, the CPEPA scheme focuses on supporting the development of inter-and/or multi-disciplinary areas and specific research projects in these areas.

The universities will be required to take up academic, research and other activities in one or more inter- and/or multi- disciplinary areas of contemporary significance in fields like, physical/ chemical/ biological/ social sciences and humanities. The UGC has proposed to identify up to 25 universities from all over the country for financial support under the scheme during the 11 {+t} {+h} Five Year Plan Period, with each one to set up a "centre with potential for excellence in a particular area".

The main objectives of the scheme include encouraging and facilitating the chosen departments at the selected university to work together by associating their like minded faculty members. The scheme also tries to build up cooperation and collaboration in their programmes and activities on a regular basis, by cutting across departmental and/or discipline barriers.

While there will be no preference on the subject areas to be identified and/or taken up under the scheme, it is necessary that each one has to be of the inter- and/or multi-disciplinary type and be in the emerging, frontier or cutting edge subject areas of regional, national and/or international importance.

It is expected that two or more departments at the university will be able to jointly launch new and innovative academic, research and/or extension programmes / activities in inter- and/or multi-disciplinary areas; take up this endeavour, to initiate major programmes/ activities of regional/national/international interest and importance; and benefit from their combined academic performance, research capabilities and overall achievements;

The UGC wants these universities to reach a leadership position in their chosen fields/areas in a short time; and become highly successful in gaining the confidence, respect and admiration of the society at large.

The other objectives of the scheme include strengthening the academic and research facilities and infrastructure at

the university for achieving excellence in the chosen areas besides enhancing the quality and standard of UG/PG teaching-learning-evaluation processes, research work and extension activities in the chosen areas.

The scheme also aims at promoting excellence in academic programmes relevant to the social, economic and other needs of the nation in general and the region in particular.

Universities will be asked to take up networking and collaboration with other institution of higher education/national/ laboratories/ centres, as part of the scheme.

The financial assistance to a university will be limited to a maximum of Rs.7 crore for science/technology areas and Rs.5crore for social science/humanities areas.

The tenure of the university under the scheme will be for five years initially. Universities need to submit a detailed project report to receive the assistance.

Source: /hindu.com/13 July 2010

India signs loan agreements worth $300 million with World Bank

India on Wednesday signed loan agreements worth $300 million with the World Bank for meeting the shortage of faculty and upgrade standards of research and development in engineering and other technical institutes.

The agreements were signed by the officials of the government of India and the World Bank under the second technical education quality improvement project (TEQIP), a partnership between the human resources development ministry and the Bank.

In the first phase TEQIP had supported 127 public and private institutions by modernising classrooms, labs and workshops, providing up-to-date teaching materials and faculty and staff training.

The second phase will will support over 200 competitively selected engineering education institutions to produce higher quality and more employable engineers.

Some of these institutions inlcude NIT Rourkela, Orissa, College of Engineering Pune, Maharashtra, Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University, Hyderabad, and BIT Mesra, Jharkhand.

It will also help these technical institutions launch more research and development programmes in collaboration with the industry.

"This project will help India meet its growing demand for highly qualified engineers - a demand which has been growing parallel to its rapid economic expansion," said Roberto Zagha, World Bank country director in India.

Currently the employment rate in higher education is only 11 percent which has led to shortage of skills in sectors such as infrastructure, information technology, power and water.

World Bank's concessionary lending arm, the International Development Association which provides interest free loans with 35-years to maturity and a 10-year grace period will provide the loan.

Source: New Delhi /Times of India/14 July 2010

Three-member panel to inspect infrastructure in pvt colleges

The state higher education department on Tuesday constituted a three-member committee to inspect infrastructure in private professional colleges.

Till now inspections were conducted just once in a year by affiliating universities. The decision to conduct a re-inspection was taken due to complaints about poor facilities in several private colleges, and more specifically engineering colleges set up in the recent years. The committee will inspect engineering, MBA, MCA and pharmacy colleges.

According to government orders issued here, the three-member committee will identify the colleges with sub-standard infrastructure and report the same to the higher education department based on which stringent action will be taken against erring colleges. The GO said that the committee will also suggest remedial measures to strengthen the institutions with shortcomings. According to the GO, poor facilities in the colleges are the reason for low employability of students.

Meanwhile, higher education officials said that the orders for re-inspection had to be issued as the All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE) had given approval for colleges without enough facilities over the years.

"Every year the state government requests AICTE not to accord approval to colleges which do not have enough facilities but they are not taken seriously. Hence, we had to act and set up a committee to restore quality of education," a senior official said. Even this year the state government sent a request to AICTE not to approve any more engineering colleges in the state.

Meanwhile, representatives of engineering colleges said that witch-hunting was the motive behind the government's move.

"The state government wants to trouble the managements since several colleges have been demanding the release of funds under the fee reimbursement scheme. It also wants to close down some of the colleges and reduce its fee reimbursement burden," said a management representative.

Source: Hyderabad /Ttimes of India/14 July 2010

3,000 seats vacant in 36 govt schools

The UT Education department's "novel initiative" of online admission to Class XI in government schools received a thumbs down from students. For the first time, around 3,000 seats are lying vacant in 36 government model schools and 14 non-model schools in various streams after the first counselling.

Of the 3,000 vacant seats, around 2,500 are in humanities, 300-350 in commerce, 500 in science and 600-650 in vocational subjects. The trend is similar in both popular

government model senior secondary schools (GMSSS) in the city as well as those on the periphery. Students who have been allotted schools and streams and have submitted their fee are unsatisfied with the selection.

Interestingly, the department had allotted 10 per cent more seats to students than the available number in each school this year. Despite this, more than 25 per cent of the total seats are lying vacant. This move by the department has come under criticism since the second counselling begins today.

The second round of counselling gives students the option to change stream and school, and a large number of application forms, as many as double the number of vacant seats, are expected to be received requesting change in stream or school.

Till July 17, the students can submit their forms at the five government school centres.

Students say the entire process of centralised online admission was nothing less than a disaster. "Earlier, councillors would be present at the counselling centres to assist students in deciding which stream and school to take admission in. The online process does not allow any such option," said Ravi Kumar, a student from Dhanas.

"Even today, we received several calls from parents enquiring about counselling. The students are still under the impression that they would be called for counselling on a one-to-one basis with the faculty and councillors before taking admission. The department has failed to explain the concept of the new process," said an official of the Education department on condition of anonymity.

Adding to the confusion was the lack of information about cut-off percentages in schools. "From this year, cumulative grade point average (CGPA) is the deciding factor for admissions and there was no information about cut off percentages. This has left the students in a lurch," said Sunaina Chopra, who wants to change for school.

Admitting that around 3,000 seats are lying vacant, the department said many students did not submit the fee.

"Some students made limited choices of school and since the cut-off was high they did not qualify to take admission in most of them. The department has also kept seats for students who have got compartment," said district education officer Chanchal Singh. Though the department has kept only 1,000 to 1,200 compartment cases, it failed to explain the reason for the remaining 2,000 seats lying still lying vacant.

On the first day submitting forms requesting change of streams and schools, 1,200 forms were sold.

As the department hold the second counselling session, there are no efforts to guide students about vacant seats in schools where they can apply. The information is only available on the website, which is hardly an accessible source.

Source: Indian Express / Fri, Jul 16, 2010

HC seeks MCD, Delhi govt reply on school conditions

Moved by nearly 140 postcards sent to him by school children describing the abysmal condition of government and MCD run schools in the capital, the Chief Justice of Delhi high court on Wednesday demanded an answer from both the authorities.

A bench comprising Justice Dipak Misra and Justice Manmohan converted the postcards sent by these students into a public interest litigation (PIL) saying "it is a serious matter" since it highlighted the shortcomings in implementation of the recently enacted Right to Education Act and sought a reply from the MCD and Delhi government by August 18.

Appearing for the students, counsel Ashok Aggarwal told the bench that despite several orders being passed by the Chief Justice's bench to improve the conditions of primary schools, run by the MCD or state government, a sizeable number of schools are still run from tents, forcing students to bear the heat in scorching summer. Alleging that in its rush to deck up the city for the Commonwealth Games, the authorities have forgotten the fate of almost 25 lakh students enrolled in these schools, Aggarwal sought decisive intervention of the court.

He also referred to HC's previous directions and said "the civic agency (MCD) has failed to construct the required number of school buildings and 56 schools were found running in the tents for this academic year".

Aggarwal wondered how the authorities can abide by the mandate of the RTE Act of providing "quality and conducive" education to students when the latter have to sit in tents in overcrowded rooms with no basic facilities. The counsel argued that despite HC's several orders and rulings since 1998 on the issue of schools being run in tents, very little improvement had been made by the authorities, though all the while they have sought time through affidavits to rectify the situation.

Pointing out how many of the postcards were illegible, some were even unfilled, Aggarwal said it only showed lack of proper grooming of the children at school.

Source: The Times of India/ Thu, Jul 15, 2010

Maximum job growth in education sector

Job opportunities in India continued to expand for the seventh month in June, Monster India said on Tuesday.

The education sector saw the strongest demand with a nine per cent rise last month over the previous month, it said. Production and manufacturing followed closely with a seven per cent rise in opportunities.

"During June, online job availability rose in six of the Index's 27 industry sectors and in seven of the 14 occupational categories monitored," Monster Employment Index, a monthly analysis of online job demand in India, showed.

The Index gauges job demand based on a real-time review of employment opportunities culled from a large representative selection of online job sites, including Monsterindia.com.

Online hiring in the banking, finance and insurance sector showed a subtle growth of 3 per cent in June as well.

"Longer term six-month growth trends in several large industries and occupational groups suggest an overall upswing in hiring, which is encouraging for current job seekers," said Sanjay Modi, managing director-India, Monster Worldwide.

In the occupational category, hospitality, legal, administration and human resources registered a 8 per cent growth each.

Sectors which witnessed a downturn included information technology with a four per cent decline. IT also turned negative for the first time since January 2010, said the report.

The index had monitored 13 cities out of which Kolkata recorded the largest increase in job availability while Chandigarh saw the steepest decline, falling almost 9 per cent.

Among the other metropolitan markets, Hyderabad, recorded a four per cent growth while Bangalore saw reduced opportunities, demand edging down by two points.

Education sector leads hiring surge

The hiring scenario in the education sector is looking bright, according to employment indices of top online job portals Monster India and Naukri.com.

For June, online job availability in the education sector showed a nine per cent sequential growth in the Monster Employment Index.

Meanwhile in the Naukri JobSpeak employment index, online listing of jobs in the education sector went up by 10 per cent over the previous month. The overall job index also went up by two per cent in the Monster Employment index while the Naukri JobSpeak moved up by four per cent.

upswing in hiring

"Longer term six-month growth trends in several large industries and occupational groups suggest an overall upswing in hiring which is encouraging for the current job seekers," said Mr Sanjay Modi, Managing Director-India, Middle East and South-east Asia, Monster Worldwide.

"The second half of 2010 is also expected to create increased opportunities as indicated by the increased GDP growth figures of the country.

The first half of 2010 has been very encouraging as most of the key industry sectors have been able to move out of the slowdown phase and are heading towards recovery," said Mr Hitesh Oberoi, Chief Operating Officer, Info Edge Ltd.

The legal eagles are also furiously hiring. In the occupational category, Monster Employment Index shows that online job demand for legal jobs in June has been up 8 per cent over May.

In the Naukri JobSpeak Index legal job listings in June went up a whopping 20 per cent over May.

A steady growth in hiring activity in major metros such as Delhi and Mumbai continued.

According to the Monster Employment Index, June hiring activity in Mumbai and Delhi grew by 3 per cent and one per cent respectively over the previous month.

The Naukri JobSpeak Index had even better growth figures and put the growth in June hiring activity in Delhi at 10 per cent in Mumbai at 6 per cent over May.

Source: The Hindu / Tue, Jul 13, 2010

ANALYSIS/OPINION/INNOVATIVE PRACTICE

Time to review 27% OBC quota in education?

This is the third academic year after Supreme Court on April 10, 2008, upheld the legislation providing 27% reservation for other backward castes (OBCs) in admissions to central educational institutions.

The apex court had excluded the creamy layer from benefiting under the 27% quota and said unfilled seats would be go back to the general category. The government had also assured the court that general category seats would not shrink as the institutions would create more seats to absorb the reservation requirement.

We can discount the chaos of filling the seats created for OBCs under the Central Educational Institutions (Reservation in Admissions) Act, 2007, in 2008-09 as teething problem despite the admission process getting extended till October. However, the data for the next two academic years gives an impression that the quantum of 27% may have been far in excess of what was needed to meet the demographic demand.

In 2009-10, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) transferred 83 of the 413 seats reserved for OBCs to the general category. Of the 10,183 OBC seats in Delhi University, there were no takers for nearly 2,300 seats.

This year too, DU is witnessing a similar story. University officials are fearing that nearly 6,000 seats may get transferred to general category for want of suitable candidates from backward classes, despite the cut-off being 10 marks less than the last general category candidate taking admission in the institution.

The general category may not be complaining. But the increased number of seats will definitely put pressure on the already stretched faculty, library facilities and allied educational resources available with the institution.

This is what happens when the political class, without any scientific survey, fixes quota without identifying what constitutes backwardness in the social and educational maze. The Supreme Court had repeatedly warned against this, right from Indra Sawhney judgment in 1992 till the Ashoka Kumar Thakur judgment in 2008.

Socially and educationally backward classes (SEBCs), who are entitled for the 27% reservation in government-run colleges and institutions, are at present determined solely on the basis of the backwardness of their caste. In both these judgments relating to OBC reservation in employment and admission, the apex court had stressed that caste

could not be the sole criterion for identifying the social and educational backwardness of a person.

So, without a proper identification of SEBCs, their number was guesstimated and a percentage of seats was kept reserved for them. The apex court realised it but was hampered without contradicting data to fault the socially affirmative action. That is why it suggested periodic review of the quantum of quota as well as the necessity of reservation in admission for SEBCs.

"There must be periodic review as to the desirability of continuing operation of the statute -- Central Educational Institutions (Reservations in Admission Act, 2007. This shall be done once every five years," the five-judge constitution Bench had said in Ashoka Thakur case.

Is the government prepared to review working of the 2007 law? If not, then it could utilise the opportunity provided by the census exercise presently underway to determine the exact number of persons to be included in the socially and educationally backward category to help work out the percentage of reservation needed.

Source: The Times of India/ Mon 12 July 2010

Plan early to fund your child's education

Summer time is college admission season in India. So, it's timely to think about financial planning for college and related expenses. Whether you are preparing to fund your child's college expenses that start as early as next week, or are wondering about how you will fund your child's college education a few years from now, whether in India or abroad, the following is a simple guide to how to go about financing your child's education.

To start with, recognise that it's not just tuition fees that matter. There might also be boarding and lodging fees, and there will definitely be incidentals such as transport, daily expenses on food and snacks, and clothing costs.

You could either be faced with a crunch situation today where these expenses need to be provided for immediately, or you have some time to plan for all of the above expenses.

Education loans: If you need funds immediately, taking an education loan might be your best option. Any Indian national between the ages of 16 and 35, who has secured admission to one of the eligible courses and institutions, can apply for an educational loan.

If you need funds for a full-time course, you will likely need a co-applicant, who can be your parents, spouse, sibling or relatives. Your loan eligibility is calculated on the basis of your co-applicant's income. Part-time courses might not require a co-applicant, but you can improve your loan eligibility by including a co-applicant. Also, some banks might require a guarantor for the loan.

Lenders exercise some discretion regarding which courses and institutions are eligible for loans. They take into consideration your earnings and income potential after the course.

Your chosen course can be full-time or part-time, undergraduate or post-graduate, degree or diploma, at a government or private institution within India or abroad. You should check with your lender if your course is eligible for a loan or not.

If your course is in India, you can get a loan up to Rs 10 lakh. If the course is abroad, you can get up to Rs 20 lakh. In both cases the loan is disbursed to your chosen education institution directly.

Lenders will usually expect you to fund 5-15% of the education cost, but in some cases can offer you 100% of the entire cost of education. The interest rate charged on these loans can range from 10% to 12%, and in most cases PSU banks offer a better rate than private sector banks.

For loans above Rs 4 lakh, you might be expected to put up some tangible security as collateral. Usually, you will get a period of one year from the completion of the course or six months after being employed, whichever is earlier, after which you are expected to start repaying your loan. The industry standard is a repayment period of up to five to seven years.

Stay way from taking a personal loan towards education purposes as personal loans are typically more expensive. Additionally, education loans are eligible for a tax deduction under Section 80E on the interest paid on loans taken for higher education for yourself, your spouse and children.

There is no limit on the amount of deduction you can claim. The only thing to keep in mind is that the course for which the loan is taken should be a graduate or post-graduate programme in engineering, medicine or management or a post-graduate course in the pure or applied sciences. Please check with your accountant for your eligibility.

Long-term funding: If your need for funding education is not immediate but a few years away, you must plan accordingly so that you can build a substantial pool of capital towards funding your child's education goal. Please recognise that whatever strategy you choose towards creating capital must take into account that tuition fee inflation is running at between 10% and 15% for most decent colleges/universities. Whichever of the following you choose, its best to start early so that you can take advantage of compounding of capital to offset the impact of rising education costs.

Child Ulips: These are insurance policy cum investment plans. Under these plans, a parent can buy a policy where the child is a beneficiary, but the parent is the life assured, i.e., the person who's life is being insured such that if anything happens to this person the child will get some monetary compensation.

Child Ulips should be bought for the long-term. Many parents buy such policies when their kids are still 5-7 years, even though the college education date might be a decade away. If something happens to you during the course of the policy, the insurance company will continue to pay the premium towards the policy on your behalf, on top of giving the survivors the sum assured under the policy.

Additionally, when your child is ready for college (or at a maturity date you pre-determine at the time of taking the policy), the insurer will pay you a sum (the fund value) that can be used towards funding the child's education.

Stocks & MFs: Long-term investing in the equity capital markets is a very practical way to fund an education goal. Whether you buy stocks directly, or invest through a systematic investment plan into equity mutual funds, both allow you to take advantage of the superior returns that equities are expected to offer in the long-term over other asset classes that the common investor can invest in.

f your child will be ready to go to college in say a decade or more, then putting aside some money towards equities or equity mutual funds is a smart way of taking advantage of compounding of capital such that in a decade you have a substantial pool of capital to fund your child's college expenses.

Property: If you have surplus funds today, you might also choose to buy a property for investment purposes from which you can generate rental income. This rental income can be invested to build a corpus of funds to be used later for education expenses. Alternatively, this rental income itself can be used to pay college related costs.

Whatever strategy you choose to employ, recognise that with a little bit of planning you can help your child achieve the best possible outcome towards his/her education. Our society places a great premium on top quality education. Don't compromise on kids' education just because you didn't have the foresight to plan their education goals.

Source: New Delhi /Economic Times/2 July 2010

Standard of government schools falling: Apex court judge

Senior Supreme Court judge Mukundakam Sharma Thursday said that although teachers in government schools get higher salaries and facilities, the standard and quality of education in such schools are deteriorating as compared to private ones.

Addressing a seminar here on access to justice and socio-economic development in northeast India, Justice Sharma said: "Teachers should not be engaged in election, census and such type of duties as it harms the teaching schedule."

He said: "The right to education legislation is expected to change the scenario of schooling, teachers' appointment, education curriculum and related aspects."

The chief justice of the Supreme Court had constituted a committee under the chairmanship of Justice Sharma earlier this year to ensure that there is access to justice and socio-economic development in northeastern states.

Accordingly, the committee launched a campaign with a two-day regional seminar in Guwahati. President Pratibha Patil had inaugurated the seminar April 17.

"We would hold seminars, workshops and interactive programmes in all northeastern states and gather opinion and views from people of all walks of life before submitting the report to the Supreme Court for taking appropriate action," Justice Sharma said.

The seminars, workshops and interactive programmes are being held on eight issues -- "Right to Education - a northeastern perspective", "northeast region and media", "environment and sustainable development", "drug trafficking and AIDS control measures", "rights and maintenance of senior citizens and parents", "terrorism and human rights in northeast", "human trafficking for child labour and prostitution" and "domestic violence and gender equality - northeast scenario".

Thursday's seminar was attended by judges of the Gauhati High Court and lower courts, senior police and civil officials, high profile citizens and leading members of civil societies, representatives of NGOs, social organisations and the media.

Justice Sharma also asked the national media to highlight the scope, prospect, achievement, inadequacy and predicament of the people of northeast in a proper manner.

The apex court judge during his interaction with participants also directed the officials concerned to ensure circulation of all basic laws in local languages and launch campaigns to enlighten the people about social sector laws, including those associated with domestic violence, drugs and child trafficking.

Source: Agartala /education.in.msn.com/2 July 2010

India needs more quality research in science: PM

Pitching for greater collaboration between institutions like IITs and the corporate sector, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has said the country urgently needs to increase quality research in science and technology to meet newer challenges like climate change.

Addressing the convocation of IIT-Kanpur, he also said that the government has set in motion an ambitious programme to completely restructure the legal and regulatory environment of higher education.

Observing that science and technology played a dominant role in determining the power and progress of a nation, Singh said, "This role has become even more critical in the wake of newer challenges like climate change."

He said the country needed more innovation in areas like sustainable agriculture, affordable health care and energy security.

"India's strength in frugal engineering and extremely affordable innovations is becoming known internationally.

Indian scientists and engineers should leverage this strength to play a more prominent role in addressing problems that affect all countries of the world," he said.

Advocating greater collaboration between institutions like IITs and the corporate sector, he said, "This would be of mutual benefit to both- to the corporate sector it would mean cost effective solutions and newer technology while

for the IITs it would bring much needed funds and enhance their research capabilities."

While noting that efforts have been made to expand higher education facilities on an unprecedented scale in the last five years, he said, "The issue of quality remains".

A major constraint was the availability of good faculty, he said, adding that a large number of bright students should be encouraged to join academics and IIT community must come together to evolve other innovative ways to address these issues.

The government would ensure that the IITs function with the required degree of autonomy and flexibility and that the genuine needs of the IIT faculty were met, he said.

The Prime Minister was also conferred degree of Doctor of Science, Honoris Causa. Former president APJ Abdul Kalam and former prime minister Morarji Desai were among eminent personalities who received the honorary degree earlier.

The Prime Minister said the IITs should strive to be among the very best in science and technology institutes of the world.

"An obvious area of improvement is the quality of post graduate programmes. We need to strengthen the master and doctoral programmes in the IITs," he said.

He said bright students should be encouraged to opt for research and acquire PhD degrees.

A number of new IITs, IIMs, and IISERs have been started and more than 300 degree colleges have been opened in selected districts, he said adding government spending on higher education has been enhanced manifold.

Noting that the government has set in motion an ambitious programme to completely restructure the legal and regulatory environment of higher education, Singh said intensive consultations were on to set up the National Council for Higher Education and Research (NCHER).

"Several important bills have been introduced in the Parliament. These relate to accreditation, foreign universities, educational tribunals and unfair practices", the Prime Minister said.

A task force constituted by the HRD Ministry had earlier formulated a draft legislation for the establishment of the NCHER to promote the autonomy of higher educational institutions for free pursuit of knowledge and innovation and provide for comprehensive and holistic growth of higher education and research in a competitive global environment.

The Prime Minister said that the government has tried to ensure that science and technology formed strong pillars of its strategic alliances with other countries and establishment of IIT, Kanpur marked the beginning of cooperation between India and the United States in science and technology.

In the recently held meeting of Indo-US Science and Technology Joint Commission, several important decisions

have been taken to take this cooperation rapidly forward, he said.

The government has also launched a joint initiative of seven IITs for the development of a management plan for the National Ganga River Basin, he said.

Crediting the IIT alumni with transforming the country's image, the Prime Minister said, "The alumni of the IIT system have done our country proud. The peaking of the careers of the early batches of the IITs has broadly coincided with the new recognition and respect with which the world views India today."

Singh also referred to association of IIT-Kanpur with a diverse range of projects in railways, water resources, energy and environment and said these would greatly benefit the country.

He said the government has launched a new initiative in solar energy to be executed jointly by three Central Ministries and IIT Kanpur which would explore new ways of storage of solar energy and its conversion into electricity.

Referring to the IIT-Kanpur's involvement in a project with the Railways, Singh said the development of zero discharge toilet technology was a wonder contribution not only to the railways but also to the shikaras of the Dal Lake in Srinagar.

"Similarly, the train tracking system that IIT-Kanpur has developed should improve the efficiency and safety of our railways", the Prime Minister added.

The Prime Minister also presented medals to five meritorious students of the institute.

He said the students should always bear in mind that the people of our country, which is still burdened with persistent poverty, hunger and disease, have party paid for their education and they should in some manner, however small it may be, give back to the society and the people who have nurtured them.

Source: Kanpur /ndtv.com/3 July 2010

India: Single entry test proposed

With millions of school leavers sitting multiple examinations in their final year of school, India's education ministry is proposing a single national entrance test for universities and professional institutions.

The aim is to reduce student stress and also to introduce greater flexibility in the education system that currently makes it difficult for students to switch between science, humanities and commerce once they have made a choice in high school.

Each university in India holds its own entrance tests for various subjects. Private universities and institutions also set their own tests. Almost every state has a Common Entrance Test for entry into engineering and medical institutions.

A student applying to colleges in different states or choosing between state and private institutions is forced to take a large number of tests.

The ministry's proposal to establish a national testing service (NTS), which universities will have to use in place of their own entrance examination, is seen as a significant reform of the system of entry to higher education in the country.

"Students can take the subject tests offered by the NTS and apply to any university they want. The university may accept the NTS test or consider the Class 12 (school leaving) result of the student. It may insist on an interview. But it will not be allowed to hold another individual test," said a senior ministry official.

Even the prestigious Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), who take students through the hugely competitive Joint Entrance Examination (JEE), will have to use the national test, along with private institutions, although institutions would be free to decide the weighting they wish to give the NTS score compared to Class 12 results, the official said.

The national test will also have different levels of difficulty so that it is appropriate for the most prestigious institutions as well as applications for sub-degree qualifications.

"We are thinking of various levels of difficulty. The IITs may choose to accept the tests with the highest level of difficulty. But a student applying for a diploma course can opt for a lower level of difficulty. The idea is to give the choice and flexibility to students," the official said.

The NTC will also enable students to move between disciplines. A school-leaver who had opted for the commerce stream at school but wanting to study medicine can take the NTC science exams to qualify for university entry in the sciences. Conversely, a science student who wants to apply for economics or history can sit the subject exams along with an English subject test.

At present, students choose humanities or science or commerce in the penultimate year of school. The streams and subjects cannot be mixed and students are stuck with their choices for life.

Although science students can apply for humanities or commerce, some of the country's top universities including Delhi University usually do not consider them for admission.

"The idea is to give students the flexibility to choose their subjects in university. In class 12 a student is too young to find out his interests or aptitude for a particular subject," said a senior official of the ministry.

"Most developed countries test students on their subject strengths. This should work if it is implemented properly," said Thiru K. Ganesan, principal secretary (higher education) in the southern state of Tamil Nadu.

According to Ganesan, the system would work if every state government agreed to adopt it and private institutions were brought on board.

"If some accept the new system and others don't then it will not help students. The government has to ensure that all stakeholders are on board," said Ganesan.

Tamil Nadu has already implemented a credit-based system across its colleges where students have some choice of courses.

The national test is likely to come into effect from 2013 and is expected to reduce exam stress.

"Entrance tests have taken the joy out of studying. Students don't want to learn. They just want to qualify tests. Just having one exam after school will reduce the burden on students and give them ample time," said PC Jain, principal of Sri Ram College of Commerce in New Delhi.

Source: /universityworldnews.com/4 July 2010

India and European Union should come together for improving labour skills to increase employability of workforce in the current global economic crisis: Shri Mallikarjun Kharge

India and European Union should come together for improving labour skills to increase employability of workforce in the current global economic crisis. This view was expressed by Shri Mallikarjun Kharge, Union Labour and Employment Minister while addressing India – European Union Seminar being held at Brussels on "Skill and Employment Policy in the context of Recovery from the Global jobs Crisis" on 05.07.2010. India and EU are currently discussing issues on labour market policy, skilling and labour mobility. The seminar was also addressed by Mr. Laszlo Andor, European Union Commissioner for Employment, Social affairs and Equal Opportunities. A tripartite delegation of the representatives of Indian Trade Unions, Employers organization and Government is participating in the seminar. This is the 4th Seminar with EU in the last four years. The earlier seminars were on skill development; social security and social protection; employment relation and resolution of conflicts.

Union Labour and Employment Minister Shri Kharge said that skills and knowledge are the driving forces of economic growth and social development of any country. The economy becomes more productive, innovative and competitive through the existence of skilled human capital. It was with this shared belief that the theme for the First India-EU Seminar in 2006 under the series was 'Skill Development, Training and Employment". This year the focus of our discussion again is on skill development particularly in the face of challenges posed by global jobs crisis worldwide. These developments have reinforced the need for continuous focus on skilled human capital to ensure more sustainable growth.

He said that the last few decades have demonstrated that global economies are truly interdependent and are becoming increasingly integrated. Globally integrated economies require globally integrated societies. The demographic dividend in some regions should not remain unutilized or underutilized. A globalized world will ultimately require redistribution of human skills in regions which witness a 'demographic deficit'. Skilled human capital will have to be provided to certain regions to sustain their economic growth. Therefore the issue of skill development is of great significance for both developed as well as

emerging economies. The developed world has a huge stake in ensuring that the human resources available in large numbers in developing economies are adequately empowered by investing in their education and skill development.

Union Labour and Employment Minister Shri Kharge said that the task of nation building, reducing poverty and ensuring productive employment, cannot be met without a large stock of human capital equipped with quality knowledge and skills. Accordingly, increased emphasis on skill development, universalisation of secondary education and significant expansion of higher education are priority areas for India. Plans have been formulated and goals set for vocational training, skill development and growth of technical institutions. This would equip our youth to meet the challenges of a globally competitive environment.

He mentioned that out of a labour force of around 470 million in India a significant proportion is in the age group of 25 to 45 years. India recognizes the importance of this demographic dividend, Government of India has taken ambitious policy measures which focus on the skill development and vocational education. These would meet the future demand supply gaps and equip our workforce for finding decent and productive employment in a competitive environment.

Union Labour and Employment Minister Shri Kharge told that in India a large number of workers acquire skills in an informal manner, either because of family tradition or occupation or by virtue of being employed in a particular enterprise for a long time. The skills acquired are in multifarious disciplines such as retail, construction, agriculture, hospitality etc. Most of these people are experienced but due to the lack of certification they are not able to move upward. Hence there is a need for benchmarking of skill standards and certification of our vast labour force, especially in the unorganized sector.

He said that due to globalization, privatization and liberalization there is constant adoption of new technologies by industry. In this scenario it is challenging for any training system to keep pace with upgradation of the skill levels of the workforce. Moreover, the global jobs crisis has further reinforced the need for continuous skill upgradation, lifelong learning and multi skilling. The role of skill development in finding decent and productive employment is of paramount importance specially in times of such crisis. It is thus important to identify the emerging skill areas, adopt them into our training system and update the knowledge and skill levels of our trainers. In such situations, lifelong learning is key to survival.

He further said that in order to meet the above mentioned challenges we have taken major initiatives to enhance the skill development in our country. Skill development is an important policy tool for our Government to enhance employability and earning capacity of work force. Government of India is promoting Skill Development that is socially inclusive and equitable. In this direction "National Policy on Skill Development" has been approved by

Government of India which aims at empowering all individuals through improved skills, knowledge and internationally recognized qualifications. This would help them gain access to decent employment and ensure India's competitiveness in the dynamic Global Labour market. The National Policy on Skill Development has set a target of skilling 500 million people by year 2022 to meet the emerging challenges.

Shri Kharge told that the National Policy for Skill Development deals with issue of Skill mismatch and Skill Mapping. It suggests establishment of Labour Market Information System and Human Resource Planning for realistic assessment of economic trends and labour market needs. A Nationally agreed framework that would guide and reflect the agreement of stake holders is also underway. Such Framework will act as a bridge between different national systems. It would facilitate transparency, mobility and progression of different levels of skilled people working in and outside the country.

The upgradation of Industrial Training Institutes has been taken up under various schemes. This includes upgrading the infrastructure facilities including tools, machinery and equipment, Training of Trainers and upgrading classrooms and teaching aids. Skill Development Initiative has been launched in year 2007. Under this "Modular Employable Skill" programme has been started in which short term modular training programmes in flexible delivery schedules are being organized. In 52 sectors a total number of 1158 courses have been developed for imparting skills. The assessment of competencies of trainees under these training programmes are carried out by third party independent Assessing Bodies. Certification is done by National Council for Vocational Training for ensuring quality skilled manpower. The scheme has gained momentum and the progress made is noticeable. Around 0.7 million persons have been trained so far.

Industries are being involved actively with the upgradation of institutes and Training of Trainers in the form of Institute Management Committees. Industry is associated in developing curriculum providing training and arranging placements. They have been given flexibility to conduct training programmes to suit local economy. This would increase the relevance of training to industry. Government of India has initiated action to set up 1500 ITIs and 5000 Skill Development Centers in the country in Public Private Partnership mode. These facilities will be created in the unserviced, disadvantaged, hilly, difficult & backward areas so that the large unskilled workforce in these areas could be brought at par with the workforce in developed regions.

Union Labour and Employment Minister Shri Kharge expressed the hope that this exchange of information with EU would go a long way in strengthening our relationships with EU. It will also boost employment and increase global labour mobility, he added.

Source: New Delhi /pib.nic.in/5 July 2010

Need for agility in a globalised world

Director, HP Labs, India, says that a major challenge in research & development (R&D) is to stay updated; hence professionals need to keep track of the latest trends Research & Development (R&D) refers to creative work to expand the existing pool of knowledge. Research may encompass any field, from arts and humanities to sciences and engineering. Focusing on the information and communications technologies (ICT), the emerging trends in R&D include convergence of digital media (including paper), convergence of wireless and optical communication, evolution towards intelligent infrastructure, rich and intuitive human-computer interaction and cloud computing, among others.

A major challenge in this field includes updating yourself. As such, dealing with complexity requires knowledge of many domains and strong collaborative teams. Another challenge that most businesses are facing today includes changing business models, hence the need to be agile and fast in this globalised world. Since there are a plethora of options to choose from, one needs to know how to choose the right opportunities. Similarly, real-time information sharing and collaboration across multiple time zones poses a major challenge. A professional also needs to learn to extract useful information from a vast amount of data.

Growth Areas

The current demands in R&D lie in services automation, novel services and applications (where margins are significantly higher than in the HW), application of IT in traditional businesses (transportation, heavy industries, manufacturing, education, healthcare), e-governance, and simplifying IT for the non-technical population all over the world, especially in the developing world.

Skill-Sets Required

The ability to think critically and have good judgment to trade off competing requirements and opportunities is the need of the hour. Also, knowledge of technologies, new trends and business acumen are the pre-requisites. To get into the industry, one should also have a strong foundation in science and engineering with awareness of business trends. Besides, good communication skills are paramount these days to rise in any organisation.

Remuneration

Remuneration is attractive and growth opportunities are unlimited for those who are outstanding performers because there is shortage of technology experts and mid-level managers. The point to keep in mind is that after entering an organisation, the educational background counts very little; it is the performance on-the-job that matters, which includes viewing the problem space in a broader context and with a strategic vision. Thus, exposure and experience in multiple areas is critical for career growth.

Source: New Delhi /Times of India/5 July 2010

Foreign exchange

While universities in countries like China and Hong Kong have been rising up the ladder, India despite having one of the largest higher education systems in the world, has failed to build world-class universities. Even Delhi University, one of the most sought-after universities in the country, does not feature in the top ranking universities of Asia, let alone the world. One of the plausible reasons as pointed out by PB Sahu, dean, international relations, DU, is its students' lack of international exposure.

According to Sahu and many other educationists, "Offering an international education is no longer an option but a necessity for educational institutes." This change can be ascribed to the increasing movement of individuals across the world due to globalisation. "International education gives students a chance to understand other cultures and form a global perspective about issues," he adds.

DU, while realising the importance of an international exposure, is keen on casting its net wide. It has signed many MoUs with universities and colleges abroad for student and faculty exchange programmes. The two main international initiatives of the university include the Erasmus Mundus Mobility Programme organised by a consortium of 12 European universities and eight Indian universities, and Universitas 21 exchange network. Apart from this, departments and colleges too have signed MoUs with other universities at an individual level.

However, these programmes are by and large availed by students at the postgraduate level. At the undergraduate level, college students have to remain content with cultural exchange programmes. Deepak Pental, vice-chancellor, DU, says, "Many colleges send their students for participating in international debates or cultural exchange programmes. But they are for a shorter duration and most of the time a one-way process. Not many international students come to DU. It has to be a two-way process where students from other countries study in our university."

Pental says that the university did make an effort to invite 100 students from various UK institutes to the Delhi University. "But since they have very little time it is more like a tourism trip. The real international education comes with academic exchange programmes. And DU unfortunately does not have that provision," he says. The university is hopeful that once the semester system is in place in colleges, there can be academic exchange too. "We want our students to go and spend a semester in a foreign university. Similarly, their students should be spending a semester in our university to make the most of international education in its true sense."

It is not only DU that is interested in such academic exchange at the undergraduate level. Universities abroad too are keeping an eye on the latest developments in the university. "International education is a two-way process. We too want our students to go and study in India since India is becoming the hub of economic activities. We are hopeful that once DU starts the semester system, we would have academic exchange programmes where students

from DU can study one semester in our university and vice versa," says Marcus Williams, director, international affairs, University of Sussex, UK.

Sahu says that the university understands the importance of international academic exchange at the undergraduate level. "The Erasmus Mundus and U-21 already have the provision that applies to undergraduates, postgraduates, doctoral, postdoctoral as well as the academic staff. We have also signed MoUs with Hamburg and California University. But the absence of grading and semester system have till now stopped us from implementing the provision of academic exchange at the UG level. The university recently had a meeting with various vice-chancellors and European Union officials. It signed the Delhi Accord to increase students' mobility at all levels."

In 2009, the university had hosted around 11 students and one academic staff from the Katholeike Univ, Lueven, Belgium for two months in the department of history, under the Erasmus Mundus programme. Under Universitas 21 exchange network, four students from Edinburgh have joined the history department.

Additionally, DU is part of the U21 research projects on water resources and food security, being coordinated by the University of Melbourne and the University College Dublin. "Six of our undergraduate students participated in the summer workshop on Climate Change Adaptation held at the University of Queensland in the summer of 2009," Sahu informs. But this is a very small number and the university wants more academic exchange programmes in place.

The challenges

If on the one hand the university administration is keen to have this international academic exchange in place, colleges affiliated to the Delhi University confess it to be a challenging affair. "We are struggling with our own issues of accommodating students and creating infrastructure for implementing the OBC quota. Of course, we do want our colleges to have international exchange programmes, but only when infrastructural compulsions are done away with," says IS Bakshi, principal, Dayal Singh College. Sahu agrees that infrastructure limitations and teachers' resistance with regard to the semester system is acting as a major impediment in this regard.

"But the Indian government wants Indian higher education to be internationally recognised and universities can negotiate with the University Grants Commission for funds."

Source: New Delhi /Times of India/5 July 2010

The World on a pitch

The onset of the admission season sees frenetic activity at Delhi University. Students from different parts of the country descend on the campus to gain admission in their preferred colleges. However, step into the international hostel of the university and a relaxed and warm atmosphere greets you. Here, the football world cup has taken centre stage.

Students from different nationalities have marked their favourite teams. Many of the students staying here on campus are from the African continent and with the world cup being staged in Africa for the first time; it's a matter of pride for them. "I was supporting Ivory Coast because of Didier Drogba, but with them being out I am hoping that Brazil would win," says Adebisi Aderayo who is from Nigeria. Aderayo who was a professional football player finds little time to play football in the university campus.

The hostel has students from various nationalities like China, Germany, Holland and Fiji, among others. Hence, it is justifiable that the atmosphere in the common room is charged with polarised allegiances. "Many a time we have two sects of students supporting different teams, you will see them sitting separately so that no one gets in the way of the others' celebrations. Thankfully, we all don't speak the same language or else it would be difficult to manage," jokes Pankaj Giri, the president of the international students and a student from Nepal.

"We have also had students from Germany and Holland who have taken a break and are travelling around India during the world cup, city-hopping , celebrating their team's success with more people," says Ashmeel Kim, a student from Fiji. The world cup has also inspired these students to set up their own little football backyard where a handful of students, spurred on by the inescapable fervour, match their footballing skills.

Football also serves as a connection to places that they belong to. "That's the beauty of football. It unites people and helps them connect with events that we have lived before. And even though we have our own favourite teams, in the end we know it is a game," says Giri.

Giri believes that the world cup helps in getting people from diverse backgrounds together when otherwise they don't have any reason to stick together. "People gather around the TV, especially for the matches that are late in the night because by that time everyone is in the hostel. We don't want the football world cup to end because it adds colour to our lives in a foreign land," sums up Giri.

Source: New Delhi /Times of India/5 July 2010

The death of Mumbai University

As the University of Mumbai gets ready for another no-holds-barred fight to choose its vice-chancellor on Wednesday, Dr Aroon Tikekar, a well-known journalist and local historian who wrote a biography of the university during its sesquicentennial year, laments the fall of the once-great institution.

Time was when the vice-chancellors of the University of Mumbai, from Justice K T Telang to Justice P B Gajendragadkar, were persons of eminence and integrity. They were also able administrators with a vision, who commanded great public respect. But a little over three decades ago, the decline set in—and, going by what we are seeing today, has evidently reached its nadir.

It is disgraceful that in a year when the government is celebrating the golden jubilee year of Maharashtra, the

second oldest university in the country, which has occupied place of pride in the academic world in India and abroad, remained without a regular vice-chancellor, pro-vice chancellor and even registrar for most of the year. And that too when, following the lead given by the HRD ministry, the state government is supposed to be contemplating reforms in higher education and making the VC an important player in the process.

However, looking at the miserable track record of the state's education department for the last three decades, such a lacuna, symptomatic of bureaucratic interference and callous indifference on the part of the powers that be, was perhaps inevitable. The University of Mumbai has particularly been a victim of bureaucratic and political interference, resulting in a succession of progressively worse vice-chancellors, where the predecessor invariably appeared superior to his or her successor.

After the Maharashtra Universities Act of 1974 came into effect, the position of vice-chancellor became a salaried, full-time one, thus giving college and university teachers an opportunity for further career advancement. However, the same act also devalued the post and provided scope for political interference.

The process intensified when politicians themselves assumed the role of self-styled education barons and began opening colleges and universities of their own. While scant attention was paid to quality in education, expansion and the ever-increasing number of colleges was considered growth in education. University education then went on to become like a cash crop, spinning money and resultant power. In such an unethical and unhealthy situation, manipulations at the university level became the need of the hour, and vice-chancellors became key persons for manipulation.

The more amenable the vice-chancellor, the better it was for crafty politicians. Each education minister or even education secretary became an interested party in the selection of the vice-chancellors who took the line of least resistance against governmental machinations. Every year, new schemes were floated and sought to be implemented to suit the whims and interests of education ministers or departmental secretaries.

Once political patronage gained credence, it was easy for bureaucrats to make inroads into the university and begin breaking autonomous academic conventions. For instance, calling for applications for the position of vice-chancellor, a change that was initiated in 2009, was done under the garb of democratic principles and transparency, but was an attempt to keep away self-respecting academics. Another convention that was flouted was one which demanded that if the VC was from the humanities, the pro-VC should be from other faculties and vice-versa. In 2005 during Vilasrao Deshmukh's time, the VC, PVC, and the registrar and director of the University & College Development Council all belonged to the science faculty. A university that neglects teaching and research in

humanities can never be considered a centre of academic excellence.

Once such time-tested conventions were flouted, nothing could deter the authorities from indulging in unhealthy practices. The vice-chancellorship of Mumbai University was given as an additional charge to the VC of SNDT University in September 2009. Whenever additional charge is given to a person, it is presumed that the incumbent holds a bigger office. SNDT University's domain is not even one-fourth of that of Mumbai University.

Political power play weakened the VCs and sycophants flourished during their regimes. In such a situation, it became easy to promote undeserving lecturers to professors, to send favourites on deputation to lucrative positions, to turn a blind eye to the indiscipline and misdemeanours of blue-eyed faculty in exchange for personal loyalty. This generally became a staple of the vice-chancellor's official behaviour.

In the wake of the rapidly increasing size of the university, the government in the late 1980s created the post of pro-vice chancellor. The person whose political patronage was greater became vice-chancellor and the other one his or her deputy. This sparked off a battle of egos, with the pro-VC nursing both a grudge against the VC and an ambition to replace him or her. The university suffered on account of this clash.

As regards the present crisis, the highest position of the University of Mumbai should definitely have been filled at the earliest. A series of objections to the constitution of the Search Committee appointed to recommend names for the chancellor to consider has, however, inordinately delayed the entire process of selection of the new VC. Who were the advisors of the previous chancellor advising him to change the qualifications of the prospective members of the Search Committee? Why should it be difficult for the chancellor, who is also the governor of the state, to appoint Search Committees to select new vice-chancellors before the terms of ruling VCs come to end? Why should the process of search start after their terms get over?

The state of affairs at the University is indeed pathetic. No amount of superficial measures can salvage the situation. Unless some drastic steps are taken, such as segregating the chancellor's position from that of the governor who largely depends on the coterie around him, giving greater autonomy to the vice-chancellor whose wings are constantly clipped by those in authority, carrying out a stricter academic audit of the university and college teachers, the University of Mumbai is sure to lose its glory —or whatever is left of it.

Source: Mumbai /Times of India/7 July 2010

Simplifying education

What comes to your mind when you think of a school principal? A stern expression, a touch-me-not attitude and a stick! Well we met a few unconventional principals at the Annual PACE Principals' Meet on Wednesday who not only defy all the norms but are agents of change in the Indian

education scene. Here're few of them: _Mr Scaria NO, Principal, Army Public School, Dhaula Kuan 'Small town becomes big'_

People from rural background are making a difference. Prince group that performed at Annual PACE Principals' Meet have little education but they are gifted in their own sense. Even without expressing with words they conveyed a lot with their performance. _'Innovation in education still 'Fortune favours the brave'ble dream'_

People say that there should be reforms in education, but it won't happen unless people have enough to eat. A hungry man cannot think.

'Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan is politicised': How many politicians have travelled to rural areas to spread education? Everything they do have some political gain.

Spreading education: My school contributes towards educating the underpriviliged. Around 85 per cent of our students are coming from the familes with very less education. We believe in giving them quality education.

Sister Janet, Convent of Jesus and Mary Educating rural India: We believe in spreading education across the country. Several of our branches are in remote villages of Chattisgarh, Mathura. We have adopted various villages in Baleshwar and have two balwadis (school for small children) there.

'Grading system will take time to catch up': Grading system in board exams is a concept that will take time to catch up. It means regular work. Parents and children will have to work on it. On our end, we have chalked out programmes to implement it properly.

Brother Dominic, Mount Saint Mary's School counselling young minds: I'm fully involved with my students. We have career counsellors who guide children to choose the right path.

Passionate about children: I don't want to bombard students with technical jargons. I believe in making the concepts fun. I make it interesting for them. The fact that I am available to students 24x7 makes me more approachable. Once a class one student came to me showing a small scratch in his finger saying that we need to change the bus as it's dangerous. I arranged the required medical aid for him. The fact that a child can come to his principal for a issue like that, makes it clear that there is no boundary between teachers and students in our school.

'Suggest us': I have a suggestion box installed in my school. Every week, we take all the suggestions to a commitee, and solve them. It helps a great deal in communication process.

Nita Arora, Shree Venkateshwar International School, Dwarka The happy vibe: My school is a happy place. I always believe in smiling and making everybody around me happy.

Making education interactive: Apart from regular knowledge, we invite views from students and make them part of a current event. For example, we invited students

and teachers to choose a team they support in FIFA World Cup. We made a mascot. Students had their faces painted to support their favourite team. BBC.com even clicked pictures of our students for their website.

For healthy life: We have a health initiative called Orange Cross wherein information on correct eating habits, proper dietary schedule and food consumed is discussed.

Free feedback flow: Parents can complain about whatever issues they feel. And I apologise if there is problem from our end.

Source: New Delhi /hindustantimes.com/9 July 2010

Regulating medical education

The opportunity to recreate the regulatory council for the education of health professionals is historic in its possibilities and potential to address the crisis facing health care in India. The lack of access to basic health care due to inadequate numbers and the skewed distribution of health care providers mandate urgent action. The new council should address these issues, in addition to ensuring propriety, increasing efficiency, and providing greater synergy among professionals.

The new National Council for Higher Education and Research (NCHER) Bill seeks to include medical education within the purview of the proposed council. The regulations suggested include facilitation, coordination and setting of policy by the NCHER, a health council to consider syllabi, curricula and exit examinations and local universities to regulate academic institutions. It is not clear how the NCHER Bill will address the specific requirements of education of professionals. Concurrently, the government has also proposed the formation of a National Council for Human Resources in Health (NCHRH) as a single apex body to oversee all education and practice related to health. It is apparent that there will be an overlap of functions between the two authorities.

Separate authority

Many issues mandate the need for a separate regulatory authority for health education and practice.

Links to health care delivery: The need to provide health services for a society demands the setting up of a system, which will sequentially address the following issues: selection of students from local areas, sufficient training in primary and secondary care hospitals, generalist postgraduate training opportunities (example family medicine), career opportunities in areas of need and continuing educational support. Such a system will mandate close linkage between educational institutions and the health care delivery systems.

Apprenticeship model of training: The education of health professionals requires that they achieve a high level of expertise at the end of the training. This requires that students acquire considerable clinical skills by taking care of patients under the supervision of teachers in an appropriate service environment. Such a model allows for narrowing the divide among teaching, research and practice. It facilitates a holistic approach to learning in

health sciences and captures the essence of the Yash Pal Committee report.

***Regulating health professionals*:** Overseeing the health profession and its professionals is an important task of any regulatory authority set up for this purpose. As medical education and eventual practice are a continuum, the regulation of education must be coupled with the regulation of practice. Across the world, experience with dual regulation has shown that it leads to a lack of coordination in training. For example, the United Kingdom established dual control of higher education and professional regulation by separate authorities (the General Medical Council and the Postgraduate Medical Education and Training Board) only to disband the model and revert to a single body for the oversight of both functions.

Some concerns

The problems of the past demand a re-examination of regulatory issues. The enabling Act, which constitutes the NCHRH, should clearly specify the model, framework and process in order to promote ideal functioning. Some important issues are highlighted.

***Relationship between health disciplines*:** The proposed regulatory council includes medical, nursing, dental, pharmacy, paramedical, public health and rehabilitation services. A single regulatory authority will result in greater coordination and collaboration among these disciplines.

***Composition of the authority*:** The new authority should be composed of diverse stakeholders, including patient advocacy groups and social scientists, in addition to distinguished medical and health professionals so that the overall health care needs of the country, rather than narrow professional interests, are the focus. The council should not be too small as that can lead to the concentration of authority in a few hands. Nor should it be so large as to be divisive and inefficient.

Independent accreditation and regulatory functions: The Medical Council of India handled accreditation and regulatory functions; this diluted and weakened both processes. The new authority should consist of two independent divisions: one accrediting education and the other overseeing professional practice. The complete lack of self-regulation of the past argues for a watchdog with sufficient teeth to ensure and enforce adequate technical and ethical standards in medical practice.

***Model of accreditation*:** The new model of accreditation should move away from reliance on detailed prescriptive rules on structure and processes to that which describes broad principles and standards, focussing on outcomes. This will allow for flexibility and innovation while maintaining basic standards. A credible and transparent system of assessment, which balances routine self-report and review with monitoring and on-site inspections, needs to be designed.

***Relationship with the government*:** The need for autonomy and independence of the regulatory body is crucial. Subjecting its decision to Health Ministry approval limits its role and delays decision-making. However, the government should have the power to provide overall policy direction to the body. In turn, it should also serve as the consultative body for the Ministry.

***Relationship with hospitals, universities and specialist associations*:** Currently, basic medical and health degrees are within the purview of local universities. The vastness of the country and the large numbers of students mandate decentralisation of the educational process with local autonomy for universities and medical institutions. However, the need for uniformity mandates defining competencies required for basic medical and health personnel.

Now, all postgraduate qualifications are university degrees. While these degrees are supposedly academic credentials, in practice they focus only on clinical issues and skills. The academic component of the training that requires evaluation of competencies to carry out research is missing.

To meet this requirement, a separation of medical and health care personnel into clinical and academic streams, as practised in many countries including the U.K., is a useful concept to consider.

Specialist associations should conduct standardised exit examinations for clinical fellowships and oversee clinical streams. The academic stream should be upgraded to a research degree and should remain within universities. This separation will avoid the kind of conflict, which was common between the MCI and the National Board, increase the number of centres for training clinicians and raise the standard of research.

***Single window*:** Previous regulatory procedures involved separate and independent inspections by the MCI, the university and the State government. This resulted in a many-tiered system that led to huge delays in obtaining approval. A single window for accreditation and approval of education is necessary.

***Standardised exams and validation*:** A common licensing examination for undergraduate and postgraduate courses is necessary to maintain uniformity of defined technical standards. All health professionals should be required to maintain standards of professional knowledge and skill through regular re-validation. A system of continued education and credits and regular re-appraisals is also mandatory.

***Transparency and accountability*:** The system should be transparent, accountable and open to public scrutiny. A record of excellence in one's field should be the basis of selection to the proposed council. The Nolan Principles — selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership by example — should form the standards for holding public office and in public service.

Need for reform

The Knowledge Commission and the Yash Pal Committee, which examined higher education, identified major lacunae

and suggested an overhaul of the system. Many issues raised in their reports are very relevant to medicine and to education related to health care. There is need for broad-based holistic education and for dialogue among the diverse disciplines and centres of learning. The regulatory council should act as a facilitator and catalyst for the creation of knowledge for society.

While there is need to reform the entire higher education, the inclusion of education related to health within the NCHER may not be the ideal framework. The NCHER can foster an interdisciplinary research and identify national priorities.

It can empower institutions with a proven record to enhance their autonomy as institutes of national importance. However, a new, separate and reformed regulatory authority, the NCHRH, best serves the goal of improving education in health sciences. It must ensure that education in health disciplines fulfils its social mandate. It should not only regulate education but also provide a vision to improve health care delivery.

Source: Vellore /thehindu.com/10 July 2010

India: Connecting universities with the world

The progress of the Foreign Universities Bill in the Indian parliament has been regarded with great interest over the last few years because it could significantly affect the dynamic between India and its foreign educational partners. The recent impetus and direction given to the bill's development by current Human Resources and Development Minister Shri Kapil Sibal is laudable.

Although the bill was opposed by one Member of Parliament when it was tabled, there is evidence of substantial shifts in perceptions since the last time it was introduced.

Part of this is an increasing sense of purpose in higher education with the stated ambition of increasing the gross enrolment ratio to 30% by 2020, as well as increasing the quantity and quality of the institutions.

Indians recognise this cannot be done with public funds alone and therefore there is interest in a developing private sector involvement as well as foreign education providers playing a role.

In online discussions with various stakeholders, most have been very positive and look forward to an increasingly vitalised and globally connected higher education sector in India.

The Foreign Education Bill 2010 is more positive than its predecessor, avoiding emotive terminology on 'fraud and cheating' and 'commercialisation' as well as 'fly-by-night operators'.

It is clear the spirit of the bill is to attract genuine higher education institutions to work in partnership with India. Over and above this positive tone are many changes that I see as welcome developments.

First, there is a commitment to transparent and time-bound processes for the regulatory arrangements. Second, quality is to be 'comparable' with similar programmes taught in the home institution rather than the old requirement of being 'identical'.

This allows for 'foreign' programmes to be enriched with local context and contributions from Indian partners or academics. But there are still aspects that foreign institutions will want to see clarified before they make the type of long-term investments and commitments needed to establish sustainable partnerships in India.

The main ones of these are the financial requirements. The bill is positive in establishing mechanisms to repatriate appropriate expenses to the home institution:

"No part of the surplus in revenue generated in India by a foreign provider, after meeting all expenditure in regard to its operations in India, shall be invested for any purpose other than for the growth and development of the educational institutions established by it in India."

Institutions will want to know if the 'all expenditure' is to be expenditure at full costs and will want to feel confident there will not be tax complications. Then there is the issue of the 500 million rupees (US$10.7 million) corpus fund that needs to be deposited.

Apparently, the intention is to levy this only on full campuses rather than on other types of partnership. My centre's research indicates a few hundred small-scale collaborative programmes are operating in India that concludes with a foreign or dual qualification.

These normally register a small number of students - a few hundred at the most. A 500 million rupee fund imposed on these would immediately lead to the vast majority withdrawing from India.

Many universities use these small-scale collaborations to gain experience and would be happy to scale up over the longer term - but requiring this amount of investment would be a powerful disincentive.

Finally, if the fund is to be imposed on campuses but waived for institutions of 'reputation and international standing' by the advisory board established by the government, what are the conditions under which this requirement will be waived?

Indeed, all reputable higher education institutions already have mechanisms in place to protect their students wherever they may be. So if the bill only allows reputable institutions to enter India then they will have their own mechanisms for student protection which will render the corpus unnecessary.

Source: /universityworldnews.com/11 July 2010

Effort to redefine technical education

With a view to enhance the quality of engineering education in the country, the seven Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) and IISc, Bangalore, through National Programme on Technology Enhanced Learning (NPTEL) -- an MHRD

funded project-- have been working on the development of video and web-based curriculum which can be accessed online (NPTEL website) by the institutions (technical universities and engineering colleges) and the individuals (students pursuing engineering).

The experts (faculties of the engineering colleges-IITs) felt the need for such a programme when they realised that in the years to come there would be dearth of qualified teachers for teaching engineering courses. Thus, to provide quality education to students and right amount of training to the faculty engaged by various technical universities, NPTEL was approved by the MHRD in the year 2003. It is since then (in the first phase of the project), that the contents for 117 video and 126 web courses in engineering courses have been developed. The fresh efforts are being made to develop more than 900 courses in 21 different disciplines by the year 2012.

Dr Mangala Sunder of IIT-Madras and national co-ordinator of NPTEL, while talking to TOI, informed: "The effort is to help the faculty and the students at the engineering institutions with a course content that allows them to have an interface with the 'modularised curriculum'. This curriculum is available across various disciplines and, by the year 2012, we will be making available 950 new courses out of which 500 of them will be video-based."

When asked what are the benefits of these courses to the institutions and to the individuals, Dr Sunder said: "The technical universities can update their course content which is to be taught to the engineering students. The individuals, on the other hand, can also avail the benefits of the modularised curriculum. This curriculum will, in turn, give engineering students an edge in their knowledge pool and provide them with the easy understanding of a particular module."

He went on to add that talks were on with the Uttar Pradesh Technical University (UPTU) and soon it would too start using the updated course contents designed by the senior faculties of IITs and IISc, Bangalore. At present, BTU, Karnataka, JNTU, Andhra Pradesh and Biju Patnaik University of Technology, Orissa, are using the facility.

Elaborating on the subject, Dr SC Srivastava of the electrical engineering department of IIT-Kanpur, and the co-ordinator for the institute, said: "So far, three million people have viewed the modules offered by us on the NPTEL website. Apart from this, 27 million people have downloaded the advanced and updated curriculum from the same website. As advanced courses are available free of cost on internet, they can be downloaded by anyone."

He also said a team of (1,200) dedicated faculty members of the IITs were engaged in designing the content for various engineering courses.

Dr Satyaki Ray of IIT-Kanpur, who is also representing the institute in this biggest collaborative project, informed: "By the year 2012, we will have more than 900 new courses added to the present course content. Out of this number, 500 courses will be available online in the video format.

This will then make it the world's largest repository of engineering courses available in both video and web format."

Meanwhile, Dr Kripa Shanker, V-C of the Uttar Pradesh Technical University (UPTU), was also present during the national workshop on deployment and use of NPTEL courses.

Source: Kanpur /Times of India/12 July 2010

Govt only bringing in core curriculum, says Kapil Sibal

Allaying apprehensions over the proposal to frame a national level curriculum for science and mathematics at the higher secondary school level, Union human resource development minister Kapil Sibal on Sunday said there was no move to introduce a common curriculum in all states.

"There is great confusion in this country between a common curriculum and core curriculum. What we are proposing is that the core of the curriculum in science and mathematics should be set as per national standards. Thereafter each State can frame its own curriculum (in conformity with the national standard). We are not in favour of a common curriculum,"Sibal said.

Responding to questions from school heads after delivering the first Kuruvilla Jacob Oration organised by the Kuruvilla Jacob Initiative for Promoting Excellence in School Education here, the minister pointed out that in all states the core curriculum in science and mathematics was almost similar. "Hopefully, in 2013 we can have one exam across the country in core curriculum subjects,"he said.

Rejecting suggestions that students from certain social segments be segregated in schools, Sibal not only strongly backed the need for caste-based reservation in education but also dismissed as "unconstitutional"the concept of distinguishing the backward classes on economic lines.

Asked if it would be a good idea to grant autonomous status to schools like in the case of colleges, Sibal said the issue needed to be debated. "However, the problem is you know what institutions have done with autonomy. TN is a good example of that,"he said.

Admitting that quality of primary education cannot be same across the country, he hoped that the Right to Education Act would help bring in quality as it laid down qualifications for teachers and infrastructural needs, which need to be attained within a timeframe.

On the Comprehensive and Continuous Evaluation (CCE) concept that has been introduced in CBSE schools, the minister pointed out that the concept was misinterpreted by many. "CCE does not mean conducting examinations every 15 days. It has to do with continuously evaluating students on a host of parameters that reflect their personality. Not every child can be a genius in academics. Some can be good in music or other areas,"he explained.

Source: Chennai /Times of India/12 July 2010

Education sector ripe for reform: mos hrd

The education sector of the country is ripe for education reforms, especially in the context of globalization, so that

when our children grow up, they are with proper educational skills, able to shoulder the demands of the increasing GDP and able to avail of the burgeoning job sector. This was stated by Smt. D. Purandeswari, Union Minister of State for Human Resource Development while addressing the All India Editors Conference on Social & Infrastructure Issues at Guwahati today. The Minister pointed out that the country's higher education Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of 12.4 per cent while being commendable considering the largeness and diversity of the country would need to be raised to 30% by 2020, in order to reap the demographic dividend of the country.

Smt. Purandeswari outlined the education schemes of the country. She especially highlighted the Right to Education Act (RTE) which gives every child in the age group of 6 – 14 years the right to free and compulsory education. She pointed out that the government is dovetailing the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan into the RTE. She appealed, through the media, to the State Governments to come forward with full vigour to implement the RTE. She also stated that for SSA, in 2010-11, a total outlay of Rs.1767.59 crore has been approved by the Project approval Board for the NE Region. She also highlighted the Mid-day Meal scheme of the government where cooked meals are being provided to all elementary school children (13 crore). The Minister stated that in order to absorb the large number of students coming out of elementary schools as a result of the SSA, the Governmment has launched the Rashtriya Madhyamic Shiksha Abhiyan, through which lower secondary schools will be set up every three kilometers and higher secondary schools every five kilometers. She pointed out that in the context of government's overall policy aimed at empowerment of women and in recognition of the fact that literacy is a pre-requisite for socio-economic development; the National Literacy Mission has been recast as "Saakshar Bharat'. At least 70 million non-literates will be made literate to achieve 80% literacy. To reduce gender disparity in literacy from 21% to 10%, 60 million out of the total target of 70 million will be women.

The Minister also pointed out the reforms the government is undertaking in the higher education sector, especially in the context of the Northeast. She stated that 374 new Degree Colleges are to be established all over the country one each in such district, which has Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) below the national average. 44 such colleges are to be established in the NE Region. The Minister, speaking about the sprawling network of the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), said that at present the IGNOU has 8 regional centres and 429 learner support centres functioning in the region. She said that IGNOU has operationalised for special institutes in the northeast region with the objective of contributing towards the professional development of the people of the region which are as under :

➢IGNOU Institute for Vocational Educaiton and Training (IIVET), Shillong

➢North East Centre for Research and Development (NECRD), Guwahati

➢IGNOU Institute for Professional Competency Advancement of Teachers through ODL (IIPCAT)

➢IGNOU Centre for ODL in Research and Training in Agriculture (ICRTA), Agartala

Smt. Purandeswari underlined that out of the 10 new NITS proposed ot be opened in the country during the XI Five Year Plan, 6 NITs are proposed to be opened in Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Sikkim. Approval of the Union Cabinet has been obtained. Mentor NITs have been appointed for opening of NITs in the NE States. She also said that the setting up of two IIITs would be considered in the NE Region; the locations are being worked out.

Source: New Delhi /pib.nic.in/13 July 2010

Words of caution against foreign universities

Philip G. Altbach is J. Donald Monan, S.J. University Professor and director of the Center for International Higher Education in the Lynch School of Education at Boston College. He was the 2004-2006 Distinguished Scholar Leaders for the New Century Scholars' initiative of the Fulbright programme.

He has been a senior associate of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, and served as editor of the Review of Higher Education, Comparative Education Review, and as an editor of Educational Policy.

He is author of 'Turmoil and Transition: The International Imperative in Higher Education', 'Comparative Higher Education', 'Student Politics in America', and other books. He co-edited the 'International Handbook of Higher Education'. His most recent book is 'World Class Worldwide: Transforming Research Universities in Asia and Latin America'. Prof. Altbach spoke to The Hindu-EducationPlus on various issues related to education. Excerpts from an interview in Thiruvananthapuram:

Most significant changes in higher education sector

The most significant change over the past thirty years is what the Europeans calls 'massification' — the development of universities and the access of larger and larger pockets of population to higher education over much of the world.

In the coming twenty years most of the developments in higher education would be in two countries — China and India. Because China and India still enroll only a modest percentage of the age group for higher education. In China now it is about 22 per cent and in India 10 per cent. So there is a huge scope for growth here and that is a dramatic challenge for the higher education system.

Another factor is globalisation which affects a lot of sectors including higher education. Science and scholarship have become much more internationalised. You have large numbers of students going abroad to study. The numbers of students who flow across borders have increased dramatically. The two largest sources of students for the USA are China and India.

On quality of education

Even in the U.S. there is a huge difference in quality between the brand names you know here and the average university. But an average university in the U.S., I guess, is much better than an average university here. I once wrote an article on Indian higher education 'Tiny at the Top' in which I said for a country of its size, wealth and brain power it amazes me that India has so few top-class institutions.

The IITs the IIMs, the Indian Institute of Science, Banaglore,…all are world class. If you look at China, Korea, Taiwan they have more top quality institutions.

Why? Some elements of corruption in the system, politics…but mainly I think a lack of attention by the government at the Central level especially and in most of the States to building world class institutions and making the investments necessary to build them. If you look at your competitors—China especially—they have done it.

They have invested huge amounts of money in their top 25 universities and they are large institutions. A lot of students leave India and other developing countries because they are thinking of emigrating and a lot of students leave India also because they cannot get the quality education they want here. The IITs here are perhaps the most selective of institutions. Those who cannot get into them do get into institutions such as MIT or Caltech… So you just don't have enough capacity at the top, the middle or the bottom.

The 10 percent you enroll right now is going to go up and not all of them may want to or may be smart enough to go to top institutions. There has to be a space for them. One of the things India has done is to promote the private sector. And that is a challenge, a problem and an opportunity all at the same time because India doesn't do a good job of what is called 'quality assurance.' It does not make sure that the higher education sector is monitored properly so that they can weed out institutions that are really at the bottom of the system.

On the role of government

I am critical of the private sector, but it has a role in higher education. In developing countries, however, it is the government that has to ensure access to higher education. The government has to make sure that the quality offered by institutions of higher education is appropriate, making sure that the qualifications of teaching staff is appropriate, that the private institutions are not gouging the customer and that they are transparent and honest about what they are.

The government has to find money for education because it is the country's future. India is not anymore a poor country and a decision has to be taken on what your priorities are. Now, this proposal that Mr. Sibal (the union HRD Minister Kapil Sibal) has made about building more world class universities, top quality research institutions, expanding the number of IITs… it isn't going to work. Why? The financial figures that I have seen, what the Central government is discussing…is way too inadequate for what they are trying to do.

Honestly, I think it is very difficult to have world quality institutions in far flung places because good professors don't want to live there and top students don't want to go there. Yes, it is important to help local communities and you can do that with other local institutions. Most of the top universities are in relatively interesting parts of the countries in which they are located.

I think India needs to be realistic about how it builds these new institutions. You might want to start with the ones you already have and improve them. Even JNU or a Delhi University and such institutions which are discussed as being among the better institutions here, are not there high up in the global rankings. Academics need to be of high quality and they need to be paid properly. The creation of a work environment and the measurement of academic performance do not take place. An academic sticks around and his pay goes up gradually…that is not a good system.

On the entry of foreign educational institutions

I don't think the proposals formed by the Indian government on this front are going to solve any problem. To expect foreign universities to invest the kind of money they are being asked to… why do it? Then you say, you cannot take profits out. Most branch campuses are intended to make money for the home institution. That is the reality. There are very few exceptions.

Even without these restrictions, the Harvards and the Oxfords are not going to establish branch campuses here or anywhere else. If they do establish a small campus they are going to be very careful about whom they are admitting. Just last week one of the branch campuses of the Michigan State University in Dubai failed—there weren't enough enrolments.

In any case India should not be relying on foreigners to improve the higher education system. It is not practical. Most of the institutions which are going to rush in if India opened its policy doors wider are low end institutions.

Here, I think the Chinese have got it right. There the regulatory environment is about partnering. Their rules say that if a foreign university comes it has to partner with a Chinese university and it has to be 51 per cent owned by the Chinese. Some, not many, decent foreign institutions have gone there. There may be 10 or 15 such partnerships. But there are low end institutions too going there.

In this sense I am sort of happy that the legislation planned here is so restrictive. But all the same I think inviting foreign universities is a bad idea. Some of the IITs and such institutions already partner with the U.S. institutions. Expand this model.

Source: /hindu.com/13 July 20110

Right to Education likely to be watered down

In what could end up diluting the Right to Education Act, the government is considering a crucial amendment whereby schools will not be required to admit all applicants and can screen and select most of the students who will gain entry.

The "admission-as-an entitlement" provision will be limited to only the poor children in the neighbourhood and seats for them will be pegged at 25%. Put simply, schools will continue to have the right to screen 75% of the admissions, in a major amendment that has been prompted by sustained lobbying by private schools. Public schools across the country were up in arms, insisting that the no-screening clause could seriously affect their quality.

Section 13 of RTE Act not only bans screening but also fixes a penalty of Rs 25,000 on a school for first contravention and Rs 50,000 for each subsequent contravention.

Schools as well as state governments are also agitated about the no-detention provision -- which guarantees automatic promotion to the next class irrespective of a student's performance -- in the law and are demanding a change.

Signalling a rethink, HRD Minister Kapil Sibal said, "There are practical problems with no-screening. How will schools like Doon, Mayo, Modern and others give random admission to children? Therefore, I have suggested that while schools will not screen 25% of poor children in the neighbourhood who have to be taken, 75% will go through the screening system that the school already has in place."

Pointing out that even Navodaya Vidyalayas did screening, Sibal said a practical solution was needed to implement important legislation like the RTE Act.

With Muslim organizations agitated about madrassas not coming within the ambit of RTE Act, it has also been decided to sort out the anomaly. The RTE Act defines only recognized schools as schools while most madrassas function outside the purview of the formal set-up and, hence, are not recognized. Muslim leaders argue that the stipulation under the RTE requiring all educational institutions to acquire recognition -- which by implication will include madrasas -- is at odds with Article 30 of the Constitution which gives minority communities freedom to set up and run their own institutions.

That RTE is going through several amendments is only natural, given its ambitious intent and sweep. The first round of amendment in RTE is already with the parliamentary standing committee. Amendments pertain to giving an advisory role to the School Management Committee in minority educational institutions and widening the scope of 'child with disability' so that it includes those suffering from autism, celebral palsy, mental retardation and other disabilities.

The government is also seized of another amendment; the one that seeks to give SMCs an advisory role in all aided schools. This amendment was suggested by Kerala politicians who said letting minority schools have SMCs in an advisory role and not giving the same privilege to aided schools will put the latter in a disadvantageous position.

Source: New Delhi /Times of India/14 July 2010

Universities should face foreign challenges too: Moily

Union Law Minister M. Veerappa Moily on Wednesday asked all universities and institutions of higher learning and research to march towards excellence and face challenges within the country and abroad.

Addressing the convocation of Sambalpur University here, Mr. Moily also highlighted the need for setting up higher standards to be enforced by professional, scientific and research bodies as well as by the proposed National Council for Higher Education and Research.

He said globalisation is a relevant issue for higher education as India was a founder member of the World Trade Organisation and has undertaken certain obligations.

Describing General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), a pact within the WTO, as an important development, he said developing common curriculum, evaluation standards, recognition of credits and grades, professional accreditation and periodic assessment of standards were likely to impact on higher education too.

Universities and other institutions in India must deliberate on these developments and take informed decisions affecting their status as well as standards of education. He also said must make initiatives to build a network both within India and overseas through MoUs.

"We need to focus on creation of benchmarks in every field of knowledge as well as a constant effort to improve the same on a regular basis," Mr. Moily said.

This is the only way through which institutions of higher learning can attract a large number of faculty and students from other countries, he said.

Source: Sambalpur /thehindu.com/14 July 2010

RESOURCE

The Directorate General of Employment and Training, Ministry of Labour and Employment Today Released Its First Report to the People on Employment

The Directorate General of Employment and Training, Ministry of Labour and Employment released its first Annual Report to the People on Employment in New Delhi today. One of the central ideas of the Report is that high economic growth and growth of quality employment reinforce each other. Recognizing low level of earnings and poor working conditions of casual labourers and a part of self employed workers, the Report argues for increasing the share of organised sector employment in total employment of the country, particularly in the manufacturing and service sectors.

The Report strongly puts the idea of re-defining 'economic activity' for public debate so that women's contribution to economic growth could be recognised properly in economic terms and a number of social and family related barriers could be addressed through policy interventions. The Report firmly puts on the agenda to best utilize the 'demographic dividend' by focusing on generating gainful

employment for youth, in general, and young women, in particular.

The Report particularly aims to focus on generating employment and enhancing employability of workers among less advantaged. It is widely believed that poverty in India, though significantly declined over the years, is continuing mainly because of non-inclusion of different less advantaged population groups in development process. The report attempts to identify some of the important sources of such exclusion in the labour market and focus on required policy measures for 'inclusive growth'.

The Report notes that given very low proportion of skilled workers at present, a suitable and workable framework to enhance the employability of workers is essential. The same can be achieved by providing training to workers at various levels with emphasis on recognizing local skills and certifying informally acquired skills along with the expansion of skill development institutions. The Report also argues for rationalization of labour laws and broadening the ambit of labour reforms for achieving equitable employment growth. It sets out short-term and medium-term strategies to ensure gainful employment opportunities for all the working people with particular emphasis on the disadvantaged groups.

The President of India in her address on 4 June, 2009 to the Joint Session of both Houses of Parliament, had announced that the Government will bring out five reports to the people on education, health, employment, environment and infrastructure. Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoL&E) has been entrusted with the responsibility of bringing out the report on employment being the nodal Ministry on employment related matters. The present Annual Report is first in the series.

The inclusion of employment as one of the themes of these reports underline the Government's commitment and priority attached to this subject and its potential for advancing the objective of inclusive economic growth and development. The present report aims to contribute to the national agenda of 'inclusive growth' by focusing on those population groups who face variety of socio-economic and institutional entry barriers and fail to earn a respectable living status despite being engaged in economic activities. This Report to the People on Employment provides a framework to understand the contemporary employment scenario.

Major Short term strategies and targets include**:** Employment growth to be targeted at least 2.5 per cent per annum compatible with the 9 percent growth in the economy; Promote labour intensive and high employment elasticity sectors to achieve the quantitative employment growth target; Focus on inclusion of youth, women and vulnerable groups with their specific needs of training and skill development; Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) must reach out to all poor households with 100 days of assured employment; An urban employment guarantee scheme on

the lines of MGNREGA may be considered; National Floor Minimum Wage to be given statutory sanction; Statutory provisions to provide social security and improved conditions of work and remuneration of contract workers at par with the regular employees; Expand the outreach of Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY) scheme to all poor households; Well calibrated withdrawal of stimulus package for labour intensive exporting enterprises *e.g.* textiles, handicrafts, gems and jewellery; Re-skilling the retrenched workers for redeployment; Developing Information base and e-monitoring on real time basis; and Compilation of employment/unemployment data on annual basis regularly.

Key Medium term strategies and targets are: Focus on self-employed and casual workers for improving livelihood; Enhance the scope of employment in the organised sector; Enhance regular employment for less advantaged groups and in poorer states; Comprehensive coverage of unorganised sector workers under social security schemes; Rationalisation and simplification of labour regulations and broadening the ambit of labour reforms; Promote diversification of rural workforce to off-farm and non-farm activities; Promote green technology, green jobs and encourage greening the workplace; Detailed skill mapping mechanism to be evolved; Credible and independent accreditation & certification process to be created; Upgradation of all training providing institutions and strengthening delivery through – Public Private Partnership (PPP) Mode; Creating large number of skill development institutions and pool of trainers to expand the outreach of skill development initiatives; Target regions with concentration of vulnerable social groups such as Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Castes, minorities, women, illiterate less skilled for active labour market policies; and ISO Certification of skill development institutions and assessing bodies.

The Report solicits valuable comments and suggestions from the people on major issues highlighted in this Report specially those relating to the employment of youth, women and the disadvantaged groups. The Report is uploaded on the website of Ministry of Labour & Employment at ***http://labour.nic.in*** and comments/suggestions may be sent at the following address:

E-mail id: rpemp-feedback@nic.in

Fax: 011- 23351878, 011- 23350896

Postal Address: Joint Secretary / Director General Employment & Training, Ministry of Labour & Employment, Shram Shakti Bhawan, 2-4, Rafi Marg, New Delhi- 110001

Source: New Delhi /pib.nic.in/2 July 2010

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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