



**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](http://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****Entry of foreign universities, whom does it benefit?**

*We need more institutes of higher education that become brands in their own right, rather than inviting foreign varsities.*

The ministry of human resource development (HRD) will be tabling a bill on the entry of foreign higher educational Institutions to provide education in India in the current session of parliament, if things go as planned. Going by the arguments of the ministry, the bill will have to be welcomed by one and all.

In a written reply, the minister of state for finance had informed the Rajya Sabha that during 2008-09, an amount of \$ 2.247 billion was sent out of the country as remittance towards tuition fees and other expenses of Indian students studying abroad. The figures for earlier three years were also provided. The amount has doubled every year.

This is no doubt a large sum of money that is moving out of the country. The entry of foreign universities will prevent the outflow of that money is one of the arguments in favour of permitting foreign universities. Two questions are pertinent here: Is the entry of foreign universities an option to remedy the situation? Will those who are opting to move out of the country for higher qualifications decide to stay on if the foreign universities pitch their tents here? At least the HRD seems to think so.

**Quality education**

The public at large thinks very differently. Those who have wealth will continue to move out to meet their interests. They are a small minority. It may not also be true that those who are moving out of the country are in search of quality education, though there are exceptions.

The concern of the country should be the majority who do not have enough of means to study even in the country. But the more basic question is why is it in the last 63 years of independent India we have not been able to provide world class higher education for our people? What hindered us from establishing high quality institutions?

The blame must rest at the doors of the Indian state. The state simply did not permit establishment of high quality institutions. With bureaucratisation of higher education, the mediocre ones flourished and the excellent ones were suffocated. And yet, in spite of adverse conditions that we still have some world class institutions is a tribute to the Indian intelligentsia.

Our IITs, IIMs, Birla Institute of Technology, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi and several other Colleges are known world wide. We should have allowed them to be world-class and should have encouraged many more to reach those levels. We did not do it under the license raj. How to compete in the international arena is a question now. The Indian state is convinced that the only way to enhance quality and to make higher education meet global standards is to open up.

We did that earlier with industry and then with farming and are now moving into education. In both industry and agriculture, we have not gained as a result of opening up. In fact, we have lost out. Coca Cola came and purchased brands like Thumps Up and Limca. There are no more any local drinks available in the market now. Our pharmaceutical giant Ranbaxy has also been sold.

With Monsanto and other corporations entering into agriculture, we have increasing suicide of farmers and dependency on the multinational corporations for seeds, fertilisers and farming. Today the Indian market is full of foreign brands and our manufacturers are working for the MNCs.

Instead of producing steel, we export iron and ore. We are still raw material suppliers. We supply jute and cotton. Today the world is of brands. Only the brand sells. We have not been able to create brands. In fact, we were prevented from doing so.

At the level of higher education, what we need are more institutes of higher education that become brands in their own right rather than inviting foreign universities. We can easily create them. There is genius here. Foreign universities will be universities with forms and without substance.

With their huge capital, they will concentrate on infrastructure as many private universities do at present. They would charge exorbitant fees making education out of reach for the majority. There will be style without much content in what they offer. Students will be marketable commodities without learning skills and attitudes for life and living. Higher education will be transformed into an industry than a service.

**Primary purpose**

As long as the primary purpose of higher education is to build human resource, it should never be a commercial venture. Secondly, higher education is to build the nation. Foreign providers will never be able to understand the concept of India. How will they then assist in the nation-building exercise?

India should have a brand of its own for higher education if education has to serve national interests. One way of creating that brand is to convert our present top institutions like the IITs, IIMs, IISc and our institutes of advance studies into universities. Allow them to affiliate top private and public colleges who are ready to remain under their control as long as they meet standards. Such private and public colleges could gradually grow and can become brands by themselves.

Instead of encouraging and gradually influencing South Asia through establishment of higher educational institutions there with state support, it is sad that the country is encouraging foreign business houses to enter educational sector. The primary reason why foreign universities are eager to come to India is to make as much money as possible.

The aspect of viewing higher education as a commercial activity is a recent phenomenon due to the politician-business nexus. With the entry of foreign universities, this nexus is likely to be strengthened, attacking the very premises on which we build the edifice of higher education — of access, inclusion and justice — the directives of the Constitution of the country.

**Source:** /deccanherald.com/28 July 2010

## NEWS

### New institutes worried about AICTE decision

The newly approved technical institutions — including management and engineering colleges — in the state this year are staring at a potential legal crisis due to the All India Council for Technical Education's (AICTE) move to withhold the grant of letter of approvals (LoAs) to these institutions on the grounds of 'incomplete data'.

The council's move comes after it had released the list of approved technical institutions in two phases — on June 14 and 29 — only to later take a fresh look and consider withdrawal of approval to some of these institutions. "There is no communication, whatsoever, from the AICTE as to what it means by incomplete data," the head of a city-based academic society, which is to start a management college, told TOI.

The state governments as well as the director of technical education (DTE) have gone ahead with extending their clearances to the concerned institutions on the basis of the list that was released on June 14 and 29 on the AICTE's website. The DTE even issued the choice code and the student code to new institutions while incorporating their names in the option forms, which students are required to fill to indicate their choice of college for seat allotment.

The institutions are now left worrying whether to admit students in the absence of the LoA, which is a key requirement for cementing the approval. The AICTE's approval process handbook for new institutions clearly states that the admission authority "shall not" permit admission of students to a technical institution, which is not approved by the council.

New management colleges, in particular, are facing immediate trouble as the first round of the centralised admissions conducted by the DTE is to commence from July 21, when students will start reporting to the new colleges to secure their allotted seats. The process for filling up of the option forms for the engineering degree courses is also to be announced on July 19.

State DTE S K Mahajan told TOI, "We are equally surprised by the AICTE's move considering that such a thing has never happened. We are hoping that a clearer picture will emerge on Saturday, when we are to receive the council's letter specifying which are the institutions that remain approved and which are not."

Asked how the government and the DTE gave their clearances when the AICTE had not issued the LoA, Mahajan said there was nothing unusual about the practice. "For years now, we have been issuing our clearances on the basis of the list released on the council's website. The LoAs keep coming later to the institutions. This is the first time when the council is reconsidering its approvals announced earlier."

Mahajan said, "The AICTE had informed us on June 29 that 116 technical institutions, including management and engineering colleges, have been approved in the state for 2010-11. Later, the council had a meeting on July 13 and we are told now that the approval to 22 of these institutions will be withdrawn."

Asked about the impact on the MBA admissions, Mahajan said, "We will have to withdraw the institutions that do not get the LoAs and will have to make adjustments in the option forms. Usually, new institutions never figure among the top five choices of the students."

Referring to engineering admissions, Mahajan said, "Details relating to new institutions, new courses and variation in intake at existing institutions will be released after we issue the notification for the option form process."

Meanwhile, the heads of some of the management colleges, which are facing uncertainty on account of the AICTE's move, have expressed their deep resentment over the way things have progressed for them.

**Source:** Pune /Times of India/17 July 2010

### As schools log in to digital learning, online assessment the rage

*Old methods of instruction using chalk and talk are passé in this age of digital learning.*

A number of schools across the Capital are now adopting the newest trend of assessing homework, projects and worksheets online, while others are creating login ids for students on their school website where they can access with ease worksheets uploaded by teachers, test schedules, and assigned projects. With technology making inroads into classrooms and bringing a complete change in pedagogical methods, the Internet has become the newest tool of teachers, with the implementation of the CBSE's new assessment scheme -the Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE).

Sohini Chakravarty, a teacher of history at the Delhi Public School-RK Puram, says, "We have to move ahead with time. This is the age of digital learning. There is so much stress on students nowadays and learning becomes very textbook-oriented. There is a need to think beyond the textbook. Online checking of homework by teachers has also helped reduce teachers' stress."

DPS-RK Puram took to online assessment of holiday homework last year. "We have a portal where students upload their projects and teachers check it online. Teachers can also grade the student's work on his/her respective profile on the website."

The new method, Chakravarty says, has resulted in students feeling more excited about studying. "Even average students are making more progress," she says.

"Earlier, staff rooms were always full of notebooks, project files of homework. The evaluation process was timeconsuming. Now, online checking saves time and involves less paperwork," she adds. "Holiday homework and projects often burden students; we need to make it a fun process."

Students, too, are a happy lot. "Online assessment is better as we don't need to waste time on presentation," said Varnika Chawla, a DPS-RK Puram student. "When the work is online, it is just the content that is to be evaluated." Other schools have launched websites where students are given user names and passwords.

Roopa Sinha, head of the English department at Shri Ram School, Gurgaon, says, "We put syllabi, worksheets, holiday homework etc, on the website. Students can log in and assess the information. We, however, don't check students' work online. It is done manually by teachers."

Online assessment has, however, given rise to its own line of debate.

Nidhi Tiwari, head of the computer science department at Springdales School, Pusa Road, says: "There is now a culture of interactive websites. There might come a time when there will be no need for schools or teachers. We have to have a personal interaction with the child. One-on-one interaction between the teacher and the student is a must."

**Source:** New Delhi /education.in.msn.com/17 July 2010

### **School heads' delegation visits University of Malta**

The University of Malta, together with the high commission of Malta in India, organised a visit by a high-profile education delegation from India to Malta from June 14 to June 19. The delegation included a group of high school principals from the New Delhi area.

The event materialised following contacts established and developed by the high commissioner on behalf of the University of Malta with a number of private high schools, colleges and universities in the New Delhi area and beyond, the university said in a press release.

Speaking to the delegates during a recent gathering, the high commissioner talked about the advantages Malta can offer to the Indian student, such as the high standard of education at relatively economical rates, a safe environment and the fact that there is no language barrier. He argued that this delegation would be the beginning of a long-term relationship between the University of Malta and the Indian colleges and that this visit would develop into a regular event in the coming years.

The delegation, led by Megha Srivastav, University of Malta Officer based at the high commission of Malta in New Delhi, interacted with the faculty, students and senior officials of the university, participated in an academic

workshop, visited local private schools and interacted with officials of the ministry of education and Malta Enterprise.

The programme, which was designed for the visit aimed at showcasing Malta and its educational, cultural and social setting. Support for the organisation of this visit was also received from the honorary consul of India in Malta.

Over the last three years the University of Malta has been actively promoting itself through the high commission in India and thanks to this concerted effort interest in collaboration has increased at various levels. Promoting mutual academic exchanges, organisation of seminars, sharing of knowledge and expertise with Indian higher education institutions has become a prominent item on the internationalisation agenda of the university.

**Source:** /Times of India/17 July 2010

### **State to get database on technical education**

The newly formed Tamil Nadu State Council for Technical Education has decided to create a database on technical education, announced the council's chairman and Higher Education Minister, K Ponmudy.

Addressing the press after the first meeting of the council here on Friday, Ponmudy said that other important things that were discussed at Friday's meeting include regulations on fees in autonomous colleges and trainee graduates to become lecturers for which services of ME and MTech graduates would be utilised.

"The council will also work towards creating more Tamil medium courses," the minister added.

Detailing the role of the council, Ponmudy said the forum was an important one as there were nearly one and a half lakh engineering graduates in Tamil Nadu who do require quality improvement.

Referring to the increasing rate of suicides by students, the minister said that a counselling and guidance cell in colleges would be set up to prevent such incidents.

The technical education council would also try to create a strong link between the industry and institutions, besides introducing a uniform examination system, the minister said.

Establishment of research boards, youth welfare departments, new libraries, centres of excellence through NRI experts and earnwhileyoulearn programmes would be the other initiatives of the council, he added.

**Source:** Chennai /expressbuzz.com/17 July 2010

### **Kalam launches 'Save Our Daughters India' movement: "Make the poor girl's dream real"**

The formal launch of 'Save Our Daughters India', the brainchild of T. Sampath Kumar and V.G. Mohan Prasad, was done by former President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam here on Saturday. Appreciating the aim of the movement, he wished it became a national movement by 2020.

“Though there are many schemes and a concession, injustice to women continues to prevail. It starts right from the womb with female foeticide still prevalent in many parts. The breed of socially conscious doctors who refrain from killing the female foetus should continue to grow,” Mr. Kalam said.

R. Ramya, daughter of a convict, is about to complete her diploma course in Modern Office Practice at the Government Women's Polytechnic, Coimbatore, and get ready for employment. When her destitute mother put her two daughters and a son in Sharanalaya – a home for the children of prisoners, little would she have expected that her eldest daughter would complete her studies and become employable?

But, today, thanks to ‘Save Our Daughters India’ movement, Ramya is on the threshold of taking up a job. For a destitute mother of three, whose husband spent a long term in jail before succumbing to illness, nothing could be sweeter. The movement – aimed at working for the higher education of orphaned and poor girl children – started out in a small way two years ago by helping a deprived girl join B. Sc. Computer Science in a local college. Today, it is a registered movement which has already provided higher education to as many as 40 needy girls. They are mostly from the orphanages and homes in and around Coimbatore.

He implored women and men alike that girl children should be considered the wealth of the nation. Chairman of Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Coimbatore Kendra, B.K. Krishnaraj Vanavarayar, said that people should not depend on the Government alone for improvement. “They should take efforts on their own to perform and improve the country. People's movements are stronger than that of the Government's”.

Managing Trustee of the movement T. Sampath Kumar told us that the novel project was conceived with the aim of helping the poor and orphaned girls by enabling them to get higher education and empowering them to get placed in jobs of their calling and get settled into family life. “It should stress that begetting a girl child is a blessing and not a curse. It will also set right the imbalance in sex ratio of boys and girls”.

“To make the poor girl's dream real, philanthropists should involve themselves in her education, vocational training and employment. This is a one-to-one programme with one philanthropist to be responsible for the care of one girl,” he added.

He was grateful to the management of the colleges and universities who had offered free seats and also to those who had sponsored the education of the orphaned and poor girls. Admission cards to girls, whose education was sponsored, were handed over by Mr. Kalam. Trustees V.G. Mohan Prasad and M. Alagirisamy, and Chairman of the Bannari Amman Group S.V. Balasubramaniam, were present.

**Source:** Coimbatore [c2clive.com/](http://c2clive.com/)18th July 2010

### State plans law to govern CBSE, ICSE schools

The Maharashtra government is planning to introduce a law to make Indian Certificate of Secondary Education (ICSE) and Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) schools adhere to its rules.

There have been complaints from legislators and parents that ICSE and CBSE schools were charging high fees and did not allow education officers to inspect their premises.

“I assure the House that in the next session the state will bring a Bill that will give us more authority over these schools,” Minister of State for School Education Fauzia Khan said.

The state government has been talking about drafting this law for the past three years at least.

Although the state government has recently issued fee hike regulations for all schools, the state has limited control over these schools.

They only approach the state once in three years to get No Objection Certificates.

Schools feel they should be able to run their institutions independently.

“Academic autonomy is an essential requirement for an institution,” said Dr K.B. Kushal, head of DAV School, a CBSE school.

“As far as regulatory norms are concerned, they are already in place. Criteria to fix fees are the same for state board, ICSE and CBSE schools,” he added.

Bharatiya Janata Party Member of Legislative Council Ramnath Mote brought up the issue in the Legislative Council through a private Bill on Friday.

Mote retracted the Bill after the minister's assurance.

“Some of these schools behave as if they are above the law. They don't sing the national anthem or give holidays during important national and religious occasions,”

Mote said. “The state government needs to do something to assert its control over them.”

Deputy Chairman of the Legislative Council Vasant Davkhare also directed the state government to bring in law to regulate these schools.

“In Thane, the J K Singhania School is charging Rs 2 lakh as donation for getting a child admitted to junior KG,” Davkhare said.

“The government needs to do something to teach such schools a lesson.” Schools, however, say all of them do not misuse the autonomy they have.

“Certainly some schools are misusing their freedom but because of them the rest of us are being scrutinised,” Kashmira Jamali, principal, Beacon High School, an ICSE school, said.

**Source:** Mumbai /Hindustan Times/17 July 2010

### Clueless on number of seats, state stalls tech admissions

Maharashtra has stalled admissions to its professional courses- engineering and MBA-as it does not have accurate information on the number of seats in its colleges. In several cases, information that local colleges fed into the database and records from the All India Council for Technical Education-the apex regulatory body-is conflicting.

Take for instance Aditya College of MBA, Beed, which listed pharmacy and civil engineering as some of its courses, even though they only offer management. "We have postponed admissions because we are clueless about the total number of seats in the state. We need clarity on the new colleges that the AICTE has approved, as well as existing colleges that had approached the council to increase their seat intake or start new streams. We hope to start admissions by next week," said S K Mahajan, director of the Directorate of Technical Education (DTE).

The state was to commence engineering admissions last week, while the process for MBA had started. However, both have been postponed. The problem, said a source, stemmed from the day private colleges were asked to feed in their own information into a central system. "After the leadership changed in the AICTE, the council eased several norms. It did not visit any college that wanted to expand its capacity, but merely asked them for details on the infrastructure and faculty. Later, the colleges were expected to update the total seats. But several institutes did not provide the correct information."

This year, though the AICTE gave the nod to 116 professional colleges across Maharashtra to start operations, merely 50 institutes have, to date, received their letters of approval from the council. "Some may not even get the permission as the executive council of the AICTE that met recently did not give a green signal for many new colleges," said the source. "There is also no clarity on the engineering colleges that had applied for a second shift and wanted to run a polytechnic on the same premises," the source added. Till last year, the AICTE and DTE used to compile the database.

**Source:** Mumbai /Times of India/22 July 2010

### Draft law unveiled for 'Innovation Universities'

Breaking free of conventional higher education concepts, the Manmohan Singh government has taken the first step towards implementing its proposal for creating 14 'Innovation Universities' by circulating draft legislation for comment by various stakeholders.

The Innovation Universities are aimed at making India a global knowledge hub. Each one to be built around a theme or subject, these unique universities will enjoy total autonomy with regard to appointments, collaborations, resource generation and nomenclature of degrees awarded by it.

These will be open to all irrespective of nationality, gender, ethnicity and disability, provided at least half the students admitted to pursue any programme are Indians. There is, however, no mention of caste-based reservation.

### Endowment Fund

As per the first draft of the Bill circulated by the Union Human Resource Development Ministry to the heads of all higher educational institutions like Central universities, Indian Institutes of Management and Indian Institutes of Technology, and members of the task force on the National Commission for Higher Education and Research, each University for Innovation will have to establish a University Endowment Fund but will have the freedom to receive donations, contributions from alumni and other incomes as long as 80 per cent of annual income is used for development of research infrastructure. Each university will be a not-for-profit legal entity and no part of the surplus revenue will be invested for any other purpose except growth and development of the university.

Welcoming autonomy for these institutions, one academic joked that while autonomy lies at the heart of innovation, many existing universities could be truly innovative if only the autonomy in the draft Bill had been extended to existing universities.

Other academics are critical of the lack of clarity on reservation.

The Innovation Universities are primarily intended to be private institutions. However, the HRD Ministry can also make grants to develop them, in which case the President would be the Visitor and the government would have a larger role to play in their functioning.

Each university will have an independent Board of Governors that will be empowered to discharge all functions by enacting statutes to provide for its administration, management and operations. The Board will delegate its powers to the Academic Board headed by the Vice-Chancellor that will perform financial, management and administrative functions including appointments and collaborations, the Board of Studies that will specify programmes of study to be offered, Faculty of Knowledge Manpower Assessment to study and assess through research trends in emerging fields of knowledge of relevance, and the Research Council that will interface with the research funding organisations, industry and civil society.

### Intellectual property

In the case of a publicly-funded university, any new knowledge created from research that leads to an intellectual property will have to be reported to the government for retaining title. The Centre may refuse title on the grounds of public interest or exceptional circumstances, or national security. The Central government will protect, maintain and utilise the publicly funded intellectual property for which the title vests with it and it can give directions for prohibiting or restricting the publication of information to any person or entity which it

considers necessary in the interest of the country. The income or royalties arising out of publicly funded intellectual property will be shared by the University for Innovation with the intellectual property creator in accordance with the provision.

The establishment of 14 Universities for Innovation is expected to set benchmarks for excellence for other institutions of higher learning through “path-breaking research and promoting synergies between teaching and research.” Each such university will stand for “humanism, tolerance, reason and adventure of ideas and search for truth.” It is expected to attempt to provide a path for humankind free from deprivation and seek to understand and appreciate nature and its laws for the well-being of the people. Further, these institutions will seek to “provide society with competent men and women to meet the knowledge needs of the country and perform service to the nation and to humanity and cultivating the right moral and intellectual values.”

**Source:** New Delhi /The Hindu/22 July 2010

### **Innovation universities can have foreign Vice-Chancellors, says draft Bill**

The freedom to appoint a foreign academician as a Vice Chancellor, to invite a promising student to join as faculty, to allow universities to devise their own merit-based admission process freed from the hidebound UGC or any other regulatory bodies — these are among the radical new clauses in the proposed pathbreaking legislation, the Universities for Innovation Bill, 2010.

In the work for months now, the Bill, drafted by the HRD Ministry, will enable the setting up of 14 “Innovation Universities” of world-class standards in collaboration with global partners. Trying to balance autonomy with accountability, the Bill provides for setting up these universities with full public funding, private funding or public-private partnership.

The Bill’s highlights:

- Innovation Universities will be free to evolve their own admission criteria but ensure that at least 50 per cent of students admitted for any programme are Indian citizens.
- Open to “all persons” irrespective of disparities of gender or caste, the universities will be asked to devise their own version of affirmative action factoring in the socio-economic background of candidates.
- These varsities — many expected to come up with foreign collaboration — will be not-for-profit legal entities, each established after a Memorandum of Association is signed between the Central government and the private partner and the same MoA is ratified by Parliament.
- Each application for the MoA will be processed and rejected/accepted within six months. The varsity will be able to decide its fee structure but will have to disclose

it on its website and will not be permitted to repatriate any surplus generated outside the university.

- Incidentally, Yale University has been the first to propose collaboration with India on Innovation Universities and it is learnt that several UK institutions, including the University of Cambridge, Imperial College, London, have expressed keen interest.
- The Board of Governors of each varsity will have one-third members drawn from teachers/officers of the varsity. The BoG will be free to invite “any person of high academic distinction and professional attainments to accept the post of Professor or Associate Professor” and also appoint by invitation “any graduating student with high academic distinction demonstrating exceptional talent for research as Assistant Professor”.
- Though these varsities will be beyond the purview of the Comptroller and Auditor General, the BoG will have to appoint an auditor(s) to scrutinize the varsity’s balance sheet.
- The Centre will provide each varsity a grant for funding research, fellowships and scholarships for socially and economically disadvantaged students. Each varsity will in turn disclose to the government new research created leading to an intellectual property and also apply for its protection. While the government may use this intellectual property for “public good,” it but will pass on all profits/royalty earned to the varsity. This will have to be shared by the varsity with the creator of the intellectual property as well.

**Source:** New Delhi /Indian Express/24 July 2010

### **DU colleges put students ahead of UGC’s norms for ad hoc teachers**

The new University Grants Commission (UGC) guidelines meant for ad hoc teachers have resulted in a crisis of teaching staff at the University of Delhi. In order to raise the standard of teaching in colleges, the UGC has made it mandatory for ad hoc teachers to have at least cleared either the National Eligibility Test or the State Level Eligibility Test. In case they haven’t cleared either, they should have a PhD degree in the subject.

Although the new academic session began on July 21, principals of various colleges are still grappling with staff shortage — especially in subjects such as Computer Science, English and Economics.

The hardest hits are the students of the 13 science courses — which will be taught under the semester system.

“All first-year science students have to study this paper (Computer Applications), but where are the teachers?” said Savithri Singh, principal of Acharya Narendra Dev College.

Maharaja Agrasen College has six teachers for computer science — but only one meets the required UGC qualification. Despite this, the college has given letter of extension to the teachers. “What else can one do? We

cannot let the students' studies be compromised," said Principal Sunil Sondhi.

Delhi University, on its part had written to the UGC on June 28, 2010, stating about the shortage of teachers who meet the norms for the post of ad hoc teachers. Close to 300 ad hoc teachers in the varsity do not meet the new norms.

Vice Chancellor Deepak Pental said: "We have no choice but to continue with the ad hoc teachers for the time being, even if they do not meet the UGC norms. We cannot let the classes be affected due to non-availability of teachers."

**Source:** New Delhi /Hindustan Times/25 July 2010

### **New course on intellectual property rights**

A certificate course on Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) was recently launched by the Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) and GISTedge. Called Intellectual Property Capacity (IPCAP), this course is meant both for the industry & academia.

Talking about the rationale behind introducing this course, Preeti Chaturvedi, associate vice-president (education initiatives), Global Information Systems Technology, says, "At the moment, two of the biggest challenges in the domain of intellectual property rights in India are a general lack of awareness and shortage of skilled professionals. Hence, when we started out with the idea of developing the course, the intent was to create awareness about IPR and its relevance in the socio-economic landscape of the country. The other concern was that since the course is aimed at developing quality manpower in the area, it should have a strong industry focus. Fortunately, we received an overwhelming support from the industry in terms of faculty." Chaturvedi says that another equally important motivation for starting this programme was the lack of proper IPR programmes in tier-two cities and remote towns. "The technology for delivering IPCAP ensures that people with access to computers and internet connections can take this course. It does not require any major infrastructure investments, which is what we had aimed for," she shares.

The course duration is of five weeks. It is divided into 11 modules of two hours each. The pre-requisites of the course as well as the technology used to deliver it are such that working professionals as well as students pursuing full-time degree courses can add this course to their schedule with utmost ease.

"The course is self-paced. All that students require to access the course is a laptop/desktop, an internet connection and a headset. The mode of assessment is through online tests, which again can be taken by students at their own convenience any time within the period of five weeks," informs Chaturvedi.

Talking about the relevance of this course for students/practitioners of management, law and finance, she says, "IPR is a managerial issue today and cuts across industries and function areas. Indian businesses

are realising the importance of IPR as a business tool for innovation and expansion. India is generating a lot of intellectual property, which students and MSMEs (medium small and micro enterprise sector) are not aware of.

This course will equip students, working professionals and entrepreneurs alike to recognise and deal with IPR issues. Also, India is fast becoming the hub of research. Besides, internet research is prone to IP infringement.

Researchers need to be aware of the nuances of referring to material on the internet. The course will come in handy for ensuring that various cross sections of society work in a more informed manner."

The course covers a broad range of topics from fundamentals to specialised branches of IPR like trademarks, plant variety, geographical indications and the traditional aspects of patents and copyrights.

**Source:** New Delhi /Times of India/26 July 2010

### **Super Fast 'Science and Education Internet' for India by August**

*A very high-speed 'Science and Education Internet' is being connected to India through international Global Ring Network for Advanced Applications Development (GLORIAD) and the networking process will be completed in August in 2010, Dr Greg Cole, Director and Principal Investigator of the network said.*

The new very high speed linkage will be completed next month which will allow National Knowledge network-connected institutions' high-speed access to global science projects such as International Thermonuclear Experimental Research (ITER), Large Hadron Collider and several small and big projects," Cole said.

Mumbai-based Tata Institute of fundamental Research (TIFR) is hosting all GLORIAD network equipment in India.

"It is through the partnership with the National Knowledge Network (NKN), TIFR, Tata Communications and the US National Science Foundation, the NKN will be connected to GLORIAD—a special global science and education network ringing the northern hemisphere of the earth through optical fibre and connecting millions of scientists and students for advanced global scientific collaboration—in ways unimagined only a few years ago," Cole said.

He was speaking at the Observer Research Foundation in Mumbai on Saturday night.

**Source:** Mumbai /education.in.msn.com/26 July 2010

### **IIT-Kharagpur kept aside illegal quota for staff**

The Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur was secretly — and illegally — keeping aside a discretionary admission quota for children of its teachers and staff for over four decades, admitting dozens of students to seats they failed to secure through the IIT-Joint Entrance Examination.

Documents accessed by **HT** using the RTI Act show the country's oldest IIT — started in 1951 — blocked 25 per

cent of its seats in popular five-year integrated science courses (up to M.Sc level) for handpicked nominees, even as students from the rest of India had to clear the IIT-JEE for admission.

IIT wards merely needed 60 per cent marks in their Class XII Board examination and should have appeared in the IIT-JEE to be eligible for the quota seats, doled out at the institute director's discretion.

Between 2003 and 2005, those who got in through this illegal quota didn't even need to appear for the entrance exam.

The secret quota was suspended in 2005, the year the RTI Act was launched, and was abandoned in 2006 under pressure from the Joint Admission Board of all IITs, which organises entrance examination.

"This was the most shameful chapter in the history of the IITs. I tried convincing colleagues to end the quota, but failed," said a former IIT Kharagpur director who was in charge for several years when the quota was in place.

The IIT admitted 88 students through the secret quota between 1998 and 2005, including 50 in 2003 and 2004, documents reveal. The quota was never disclosed in admission brochures — unlike all other reservations for backward communities that the IITs have.

The beneficiaries of the secret quota include the children of Madhusudan Chakraborty, now the Director of IIT Bhubaneswar and VK Tewari, the organising chairman of the IIT-JEE in 2006. Chakraborty, who has also been deputy director of IIT Kharagpur, confirmed the discretionary quota to HT but argued: "Not only my son, the sons and daughters of many others in the faculty were also admitted through this quota."

The IIT has not disclosed exactly when the quota was started, but minutes of an August 16, 1988 board of governors meeting reveal that the quota existed even before the IIT-JEE was started in the mid-1960s.

**Source:** New Delhi /[Hindustan Times](#)/26 July 2010

### India-UK Looking for Cooperation in Skill Development

Shri Kapil Sibal, Union Minister of Human Resource Development has stated that India and the U.K. jointly work in the area of skill development and prepare a report between them on how they can collaborate in this area. The Minister while meeting with the U.K. Minister of State for Universities and Science Rt. Hon. David Willets, here today stated that the HRD Ministry was in the process of preparing a National Vocational Qualification Framework. The U.K. Minister stated that skill development was an area of focus within U.K. also and he is keen to cooperate with India in this area.

The U.K. Minister stated that he would like research fellows from the U.K. to do some of their research in India i.e. there should be a two way flow of students between the two countries. Shri Sibal expressed, in principal, agreement with the proposal.

Shri Kapil Sibal also pointed out that equivalence of degrees is an issue, without which, mobility of students will continue to be a problem. Shri Sibal also stated that the two countries can work together in the area of GIS and its intricate relationship with IT and that the two countries could also collaborate in ICT.

**Source:** New Delhi /pib.nic.in/29 July 2010

### Academy of scientific & innovative research bill 2010 introduced in Lok Sabha

The Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, Ministry of Science & Technology, Government of India today introduced the "Academy of Scientific and Innovative Research Bill 2010" in the Lok Sabha with the purpose to establish Academy of Scientific & Innovative Research, as an institution of national importance with powers to award degrees.

On 17th June 2010, the Cabinet had approved the proposal for setting up the Academy of Scientific and Innovative Research (AcSIR) as an institution for imparting instruction and awarding degrees in frontier areas of science and technology. The Government has also approved that an interim Academy be established even before the enactment of the comprehensive legislation for setting up the Academy so as to initiate its academic session by August-September 2010.

It is proposed to set-up the Academy of Scientific and Innovative Research (AcSIR) for substantially increasing the number of researchers in integrative and interdisciplinary areas of science and engineering in a cost-effective manner without requirement of any significant gestation period and additional funds from the Government. The Academy would offer a one-stop solution to meet the above requirement in higher education by leveraging the strengths of Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) comprising around 4500 scientists in diverse branches of science and engineering and utilizing its research and development infrastructure.

**Source:** New Delhi /pib.nic.in/30 July 2010

### India & the UK: Equal partners in education & research

Britain's partnership with India on education, research and innovation, should be a partnership of equals in recognition of India's growing economic importance, UK prime minister David Cameron said on a visit to the sub-Continent this week.

From now on each country will pitch in an equal amount of money. These marks a shift from previous decades when Britain was the bigger partner, largely funding the setting up of the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs).

In a speech in Bangalore on 28 July, Cameron said: "Education is not just vital for national success; it is one of the best growth businesses of the 21st century. I want us in Britain and India to pool some of our advantages for our mutual benefit."

Britain announced the second phase of the UK-India Education and Research Initiative (UKIERI), committing £2.5 million (US\$3.9 million) over the next five years while India will match the sum via its University Grants Commission.

Through the UKIERI collaboration the two nations will join hands to set up new institutes, increase skills development programmes, hold leadership programmes and work on quality assurance of courses offered to students.

"The relationship has changed from mentor to partner. When India was setting up the first IITs (in the 1960s) it did not have either expertise or money. Now we have both and can look at the UK as an equal," a senior Indian government official said.

Since 2006 UKIERI has overseen around 500 new UK-Indian partnerships, from schools through to higher education, which are helping to drive world-class research into issues such as climate forecasting, biomedicine and oceanography.

Cameron also said that some of Britain's aid to India could be redirected to education. This was in response to domestic calls for Britain's development aid to India to be scaled back, now that India is emerging economically.

In an interview with the BBC while he was in India, Cameron said: "Education is another area where aid money can be used in some circumstances to grow educational opportunities in India that are also opportunities for Britain."

The British government has encouraged UK universities to internationalise their higher education provision and seek out Indian partners to develop mutually beneficial research projects, skills programmes, exchange schemes and complementary curricula.

The two countries are already collaborating on a new IIT at Ropar in Punjab, and the new Indian Institute of Science Education & Research (IISER) in Pune, with five UK universities involved, including London's Imperial College.

"The delegation is keen to extend the India-UK collaboration further to include diverse fields such as energy, food security, water, urban development, sustainability, public health, cultural heritage and English language at undergraduate and higher levels," the Indian official said.

India's proposal to set up Innovation Universities, as the 14 new centres of excellence are known, has also found favour with the UK, which has formally expressed interest in developing these and other institutions.

While visiting IIT Madras, David Willetts, UK higher education and science minister, one of a handful of ministers accompanying Cameron to India, said: "Oxford, Cambridge, Imperial, Essex, Birmingham, Newcastle, Exeter and the Open University are eager to forge links during the design and eventual creation of the new innovation universities."

He said he would be visiting India again in November, accompanied by leading British university vice chancellors,

to establish a framework for collaboration between British institutions and the innovation universities.

"The UK already has more than 80 university-related collaborations up and running in India, making us the most active international partner here. We seek to move things on substantially," Willetts said.

The Indian government is keen to welcome foreign universities to set up campuses in India, which will be permitted by the Foreign Education Institutions Bill, currently going through parliament, and leading British universities are keen to collaborate.

Willetts said he was confident that future co-operation would bring more UK students to India.

**Source:** /universityworldnews/30 July 2010

## ANALYSIS/OPINION/INNOVATIVE PRACTICE

### Education sector undergoing paradigm shift

*In a conversation with ET Now, Rajesh Jain, market strategist, talks about the outlook of education stocks.*

*Everonn Education has said that it is open to selling stake. What could be the rationale here?*

A lot of things are going right for the education space, whether you look at Aptech, Everonn or Educomp. The education sector is facing two drivers. One is the change in the paradigm of pedagogy, the very basic methods by which you teachings are undergoing a transformation and which is where players like Educomp and HCL Tech come in. And the other is the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan of the government, which is awarding, shall we say, rights for various geographies to various players and there are a number of educationists who are entering this field.

It is this twin combination of volume driver plus the value addition that will happen in the education space, in addition to the huge scope for IT education, which is actually driving Aptech, plus the possibility of going beyond Indian frontiers, which is exciting the entire education space. There is also a related development in the sense that the university education and the school education have really been opened to the private sector. So, I would not be surprised if you have some public offers coming in from bodies that manage such places.

The education space is in a state of transformation. There is a lot of money to be made in addition to really adding value and giving back to society. This development whereby a promoter of an infrastructure group takes a big stake in an education company really signals a paradigm shift. That's the way I would look at it. I have also worked in a couple of projects where particularly the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is opening up a lot of earnings potential for education-driven companies.

**Source:** /Economic Times/16 July 2010

### Learning for All

As the government contemplates modifying certain provisions of the Right to Education (RTE) Act, it is worth questioning the mechanisms through which it plans to address the issue of universal education. According to the Act, no school can deny a child admission and must oblige the latter without any screening tests. Several private schools had genuine concerns about this provision as they believed that it would lead to a drop in their standards. Now the human resources development ministry is planning to go back on this stipulation and allow private schools to screen 75 per cent of the students in the general category, but not the remaining 25 per cent from economically weaker backgrounds for whom seats will have to be reserved. If all of this sounds ad hoc, it is because that is precisely what RTE is turning out to be.

It seems that the government's solution to eradicating illiteracy is simply enacting legislation and providing quotas. Little attention is being given to the real problem the lack of adequate number of quality schools. To achieve the ultimate goal of universal literacy the focus must be on the public sector, not the private sector. For that to happen, a fundamental shift in the government's attitude is required. The primary focus of RTE should be to increase the number and quality of government schools. State-run schools are the platform for mass education in this country. Private schools are just add-ons, filling gaps in the system. Imposing quotas on them is meaningless and diversionary.

If at all RTE is to bear fruit, a massive amount of government investment is required to spruce up government schools. We should be willing to spend what it takes, while also evaluating and closely monitoring outcomes to make sure the money isn't frittered away. It is only when the standard of government schools improves that they will become viable alternatives to private schools.

On the other hand, private schools should be given a free hand to run their own affairs. As it is, bureaucratic red tape is responsible for stifling the expansion of these schools. If the government wants them to play a part in the success of RTE, then it should provide them incentives to take in a number of underprivileged children for free, rather than seek to coerce them through legislation. It is only when there is competition between public and private schools, as well as among private schools themselves within a vibrant and diversified school sector, that we will be able to solve problems of access as well as quality.

Source: [The Times of India](#) / 16 July 2010

### State cannot compel minority institutions to implement quota: Supreme Court

The Supreme Court has held that the rights of religious or linguistic aided minority institutions in the administration of the institutions were absolute and, the State could not compel them to implement its reservation policy.

A Bench of Justices B.S. Chauhan and Swatanter Kumar said: "Minority institutions have some kind of autonomy in their administration. This would entail the right to administer effectively and to manage and conduct the affairs of the institution."

Writing the judgment, Mr. Justice Swatanter Kumar said: "The State might not be well within its constitutional duty to compel minority institutions to accept a policy decision, enforcement of which would infringe their fundamental right and/or protection."

The Bench said: "A linguistic minority institution [as in the present case] is entitled to the protection and right of equality enshrined in the provisions of the Constitution. The power is vested in the State to frame regulations ... to ensure better organisation and development of school education and matters incidental thereto. Such power must operate within its limitation while ensuring that it does not in any way dilute or impair the basic character of linguistic minority."

The Bench said: "To frame policy is the domain of the government. If, as a matter of policy, the government has decided to implement the reservation policy for uplift of the socially or otherwise backward classes, essentially it must do so within the framework of the Constitution and the laws."

The Bench said: "A minority institution may have its own procedure and method of admission as well as the selection of students, but it has to be fair and transparent method. The State has the power to frame regulations, which are reasonable and do not impinge upon the basic character of the minority institutions. To provide for and enforce any regulation which will practically defeat this purpose would have to be avoided."

The Bench felt that it would not be permissible to infringe the constitutional protection in exercise of State policy or by a subordinate legislation to frame such rules, which would impinge upon the character or in any way substantially dilute the right of the minority to administer and manage the affairs of its school.

In the instant case, Sindhi Education Society, running a linguistic minority school in Delhi, was aggrieved by a provision in the Delhi School Education Rules to give an undertaking to provide for reservation in the appointment of teachers to become eligible for grant-in-aid from the government.

Both a single judge and a Division Bench of the Delhi High Court upheld the rules. The present appeal by the society is directed against this judgment.

Allowing the appeal, the Bench said: "Every linguistic minority institution may have its own socio, economic and cultural limitations. It has a constitutional right to conserve such culture and language. Thus, it would have a right to choose teachers who possess the eligibility and qualifications, as provided, without really being impressed by the fact of their religion and community. Its own limitations may not permit, for cultural, economic or other

good reasons, to induct teachers from a particular class or community. A linguistic minority is entitled to conserve its language and culture by a constitutional mandate.”

Holding that the impugned rule could not be enforced against the appellant institution, the Bench said the purpose of grant-in-aid could not be so construed as to destroy, impair or even dilute the very character of the linguistic minority institutions. The minority has an inbuilt right to appoint persons, which in its opinion are better culturally and linguistically compatible to the institution.

Source: [The Hindu](#)/ 16 July 2010

### A French world-view

*France is emerging as one of the most preferred academic destinations for students who are aspiring to become global citizens, writes Proyashi Barua*

To keep pace with today's borderless work environments, it is imperative to have a global exposure at the academic level. This is clearly one of the considerations students have when they embark on a graduate or postgraduate course abroad. Some countries are more conducive in terms of the global experience as they are relatively more cosmopolitan and nurture an ideology of larger socio-economic growth by leveraging shared synergies with other nations. "France is definitely one such nation. It endorses systems on which the foundations of a truly equalised and egalitarian society can flourish. This is one major reason why I chose France over other European and North American destinations to pursue my Master's in international relations," says Parth Kanitkar, a graduate in history honours from Hindu College who has just received the Alliance-Francaise-French Embassy Scholarship Award.

"There are many developed countries that boast of an egalitarian status not realising that they have disturbing undercurrents of social and racial inequalities. One of the indispensable pillars of an egalitarian society is social justice that encompasses a multitude of intrinsic factors like for instance gender equality and justice. However, this fact is overlooked quite often. Consequently, to an extent, even the study of international relations in these countries is skewed towards economic indices that may or may not reflect multifaceted growth and development in the global context," he explains. Kanitkar wants to focus his study on the emerging nations — India, Japan, China and Russia — many of which fall in Asia. "My vision is to institute a think-tank in India that, among other things, will offer an unbiased and centralist opinion on global political issues," he shares.

French is a language that is more widely spoken across the world as compared to English. "However, we have very few people in our country who are conversant in French which is going to be an indispensable tool for global communication in the years to come. My 13 years of education at Alliance - Francaise has given me a strong

edge in this language and I hope to refine my knowledge further during my stay at France," adds Kanitkar.

Apart from its welcoming socio-cultural milieu, France is a leader in the domain of science and technology, which to a large extent is the veritable bedrock of global communication, understanding and co-operation.

Karan Sikka, who has pursued his BTech in electronics and communication from Kurukshetra University, chose France as a destination for his post-graduation precisely on this ground. "France is the hotbed for telecommunication as many telecom companies have their origins in France. I want to work in the area of value added services as this sector holds unbound potential in India. It is my dream to introduce innovative products and services, which is possible only if I now study in an environment where the technological support systems are futuristic and forward looking," he explains. Sikka has been awarded the French Ministry of External and European Affairs Scholarship. "French universities have a very strong culture of imparting technical courses with actual involvement in real life projects. Moreover, opportunities for research and development are of high standards and of an incisive nature," he adds.

Source: [Times of India](#)/19 July 2010

### Before the next step

*The idea of taking a gap year between academic years is soon catching up in India. Shekhar Niyogi offers a range of options that students can choose from and make the most of the break*

A gap year before one starts on one's quest for the future, before deciding on an academic career track. Tarry a while and then get on with the serious business of growing up from a carefree teenager to a focussed adult. A breather, before the relentless pursuit of all that which is desired and coveted. A well deserved gap year before embarking on one's tryst with destiny. Major decisions in life must be taken circumspectly, not impulsively, and certainly not by default or by a process of elimination.

Taking a gap year after high school is a phenomenon that is becoming increasingly popular in India. The 'Gap Year' concept originated in the decade following the Second World War when youth travel and cultural exchange was discussed amongst governments as a useful tool to create global understanding to prevent further wars. Started then, this is a tradition followed in Britain for many decades where students typically take time out to hitchhike and travel the world, culturally immerse themselves, learn some new skills or sport, like photography, teaching or deep sea diving or engage in community service for a cause that they believe in.

### Striking a Balance

A growing number of students in India are now taking a year off after finishing high school board examinations or after college to study and prepare for various competitive tests like the IIT-JEE, CAT, GMAT and the like.

The trend may well be a sensible decision on the part of students, as in the past many students have been known to jeopardise their board or final year examinations while preparing for engineering, management, medical or law entrance tests.

A concentrated preparation regimen for the more competitive tests may well ensure that a student is not bogged down with split loyalties; that of board examinations and those of the entrance tests. This will enable them to attend tutorials or coaching classes if desired, unhindered by time constraints and also spend sufficient time preparing independently with a plethora of study material that is available to them. Many students decide to work on university selections, filling of applications and essay writing and preparation for the GMAT, SAT and TOEFL iBT tests after finishing high school or college.

Dibyendu Shekhar Roy of Shillong decided to take the TOEFL and SAT after finishing his ISC examinations so that he could concentrate on a scholarship-winning application effort. He made it to Drexel University and has done remarkably well. So have Rahul Biswas and Arpan Das, who took time out after finishing their bachelor degrees to concentrate on the GMAT and finally made it to a good university in the US and also secured scholarships.

Biswas also used the gap year to increase his proficiency in Spanish language. Their parents were completely supportive and their faith has been vindicated by their children's success. A year was not a high price to pay. As many others are vouching for. Taking a gap year has majorly been favoured by those applying to universities abroad. Having decided to apply to a university abroad, all applications and their supporting documentation needs to be meticulously put together and sent within the deadlines. Meticulous preparation is made for the visa application and interview. This is time well spent towards actualising goals. Many who are keen to join a reputed B-school in India also take time out to study and prepare for the CAT, XAT, MAT tests for entry to the coveted B- schools in India.

Ambrose Davis, director of International Student Recruitment at University of Pennsylvania and the Wharton School opines, "Every good student must realise that there are hundreds as good as them in every country and a few thousand from over the world who will apply to the same school as they are applying to. How do I pick the winners? Sell yourself to me — through a well-packaged application. Take time out after high school to do that. If it takes a year, so be it because you have worked at good scores in the SAT and TOEFL and written candid essays and a lucid statement of purpose. Your recommenders have done their best and you have an application that makes me sit up and take notice. Only then you could make it to my school."

Ms Mahmood, whose daughter took a gap year to work on her SAT and TOEFL preparations and finally went to Temple University and is now a Master's student in Houston says, "It didn't matter that my daughter took a

year off as in the end she succeeded. Since she didn't waste any time and remained focussed on her goals, I supported her decision." Other parents emulate this view as well.

### Exploring the Unknown

Different strokes for different folks. Some students believe that working for an NGO or a social service organisation in the gap year will help them give something back to the society and also help them to earn a better view of the realities of the society and country to which they belong. Noble thinking indeed and true in the way that it does instill amongst the youth a feet-on-the-ground attitude and greater empathy for fellow humans especially after being exposed to the predicament of the lesser privileged. Some have been known to assist in drug rehabilitation centres while others have taught socio-economically disadvantaged children. These can be very fulfilling and empowering experiences that can build character and a realistic view of the world. However, it is being increasingly seen that such moves are emulated by many and generates a kind of herd instinct that makes many youngsters follow their peers without the same thought-out resolution or motive which can lead to sheer waste of time and probable disillusionment in some cases.

A few young students who have harboured aspirations of a serious nature in the area of special skills like professional sport or music or theater, decide to make a 'do or die' effort, to see if the talents that won them plaudits and hurrahs in school can be translated to success in the no-holds-barred professional arena. A gap year, they believe can give them the window of opportunity to test their skills against the best. It is a chance taken to see if they can make it in their chosen vocations they are passionate about. If not, college and the oft trodden path beckon. These efforts and the opportunity to try their skills have often led to blooming of extraordinary talent in areas as diverse as sport, film-making, photography, multimedia and gaming, 3D animation arts, music and fashion design.

### Beyond Books

Today, education has been reduced to competing for the highest marks and gaining entry into top colleges. The decision about one's future and one's career has been relegated to following the current trend and expectation of that which will bring money and respect. Choices are made based on trends, peer pressure, parental directives and expectations. As a result, the pressure on youngsters has become overwhelming; with no time and space left with them to actually discover themselves or the lifestyle and work that will truly bring them happiness. The idea that the work they do could actually be a source of happiness and meaningfulness has largely been lost.

A year taken off is not an aberration if utilised in a constructive manner to fuel a student's goal achievement path. An example, learning a foreign language. However, taking time off to work in a call centre or to just loaf around before joining an academic programme cannot be

condoned under any pretext, as such activity does not add value to the future.

### **Deliberate Decisions**

The Indian education system is often so oppressive that it deprives students from thinking clearly about their future. It deprives them of contemplation about their needs and rationalising future goals while rushing them through set pieces of activity modules geared towards completion of their school syllabus and school year. Swept away in the quagmire of schedules, tutorials and examinations, most students remain confused about their true desires and goals till the end. I have in the past encountered a dentistry graduate who wanted to make toy designing his profession, while an electrical engineer confessed that she wanted to become a wild life conservationist at one point. These are not akin to the infantile fantasies of becoming a firefighter or traffic policeman or locomotive driver or Batman. These are adults making informed choices, albeit somewhat late.

There is a downside to this when some unfortunate students are forced to take a gap year. A common occurrence has been several engineering graduates being offered appointment letters by software majors that lead to temporary rejoicing.

However, it is when they are forced to sit at home and twiddle their thumbs waiting for the call letter to join their jobs, that all of it begins to seem like a receding dream. This is unwittingly forced upon them and can be detrimental to self-esteem and confidence in one's abilities. Students who opt for such job offers should examine the past track record of these companies without being star struck by the glamour that the corporate image carries.

A deliberate choice of taking a gap year should have the encouragement of parents and guardians. Unhappiness is born from the later realisation of being stuck in a professional rut that is a shackle that can at best be loosened.

A year in a lifetime is small price to pay for future happiness and success that is more probable if a youngster takes the time to make informed choices after determining his or her own ambitions and dreams. The determination to ascertain whether one should walk down a traditional road or take the path less travelled, must germinate from a desire to excel and to make a difference.

Einstein had said, "All our dreams can come true, if we have the courage to pursue them". We can, if we think we can. Free spirits and happy individuals make better people, better workers, better sons and daughters, better wives and husbands, better parents and better citizens. A year for such freedom, the choice is obvious. A gap year is not a void. It should be perceived as a bridge between now and the future. A bridge or pathway constructed with well conceived plans of action, and certainly realistic dreams leading to fruition. The rainbow of life has a colour for everybody to choose from. Take a pause for better decisions, and make your choice.

**Source:** /Times of India/19 July 2010

### **Constructive course**

In order to improve the employability of engineering and management graduates in the construction industry, the Construction Industry Development Council (CIDC), a body established by the Planning Commission and the construction industry has launched a set of three training programmes. CIDC has tied up IKRAM, Malaysia's training institute and Asian Concrete Construction Institute, to facilitate an international exposure for its students. "The students shall work at construction sites abroad, probably in Malaysia or Singapore. The objectives of this internship programme are twofold. Firstly, it envisages providing an experience in terms of the actual working environment at construction sites and secondly it seeks to enable potential international employers to spot talent among trainees," informs Anil Chaddha, deputy director, CIDC.

The programmes offered by CIDC shall include an orientation programme and training programme in Malaysia and Singapore. "India awarded 2.3 lakh engineering degrees in the year 2006, but only a small fraction of these engineers are actually employable," informs Chaddha. Several independent studies have also indicated the grave situation of poor employability.

"This is because engineering is not industry-oriented due to lack of adequate infrastructure in majority of the engineering institutions. Also the training curricula is not in line with the industry requirements and is not regularly updated," he observes.

The training programme will introduce actual working of construction projects along with an industry overview. The students shall be provided with an overview of various departments that are established in a construction company/project site. They shall also be given information on various types of workers deployed on projects and be exposed to the latest technologies and methods adopted in the industry. "It is recommended that students should opt for this programme from their first year of engineering/management training as it will provide them useful insights into the requirements of the industry," says Chaddha. CIDC is inviting applications for this course. For more, log on to [www.cidc.in](http://www.cidc.in).

**Source:** /Times of India/19 July 2010

### **For a sustainable future**

*With an increasing demand for specialised courses, several national and international institutes are introducing a range of options*

Promoting development in a sustainable manner is perhaps one of the greatest challenges the world faces today. And to meet global challenges, there is a need for development experts who are well trained to tackle them.

Thus, to help provide individuals who are addressing global development challenges with the skills they need, MacArthur Foundation, a grant-making foundation based in Chicago, has committed \$15 million to create a Master's in

Development Practice (MDP) programme at universities worldwide over the next three years. The programmes combine training in the natural sciences, social sciences, health sciences, and management to help practitioners address global challenges such as sustainable development, climate change and extreme poverty.

The Uniandes School of Management, Colombia, has recently been appointed among 22 schools worldwide, to launch the MDP with the support of Columbia's Earth Institute and MacArthur Foundation. The universities are selected through a competitive process that includes reviews by experts outside the Foundation.

The MDP is a two-year degree providing graduate-level students with the skills and knowledge required to better identify and address the global challenges of sustainable development, such as poverty, population, health, conservation, climate change, and human rights.

The programme will provide individuals with training beyond the typical classroom study of economics and management found in most development studies programmes. A wide range of development professionals may pursue the degree including officials from inter-governmental organisations, developed and developing country ministries, aid agencies, non-governmental organisations, academic institutions, and the private sector.

In 2007, the MacArthur supported 'International Commission on Education for Development Professionals,' found that worldwide, many people working in the field of development are not sufficiently prepared to tackle the challenges they face. The creation of MDP programmes is, thus, an acknowledgement that addressing extreme poverty and sustainable development throughout the world requires expert knowledge and an interdisciplinary approach, says Barry Lowenkron, MacArthur's vice-president for global security and sustainability.

He adds: "Currently, the bulk of development leaders are trained in narrow fields, usually in the social sciences, such as economics. By broadening their training and providing them with a knowledge base, they will be able to understand and address the root causes of extreme poverty and the challenges of sustainable development." The first awards were made last year to 10 universities in seven countries. Together, the universities are expected to produce 400 graduates by 2013, with a total of 800 students enrolled each year.

The universities receiving grants to establish MDP programmes include BRAC University (Dhaka, Bangladesh), The Institute of Political Sciences (Sciences Po, Paris, France), Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Center (Turrialba, Costa Rica), Universidad de los Andes (Bogotá, Colombia), Universidade Federal Rural do Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), University of California, Berkeley (US), University of California, Davis (US), University of Peradeniya (Sri Lanka), University of Waterloo (Ontario, Canada) and University of Winnipeg (Canada).

These universities were selected based on five criteria including support from top university leadership, excellent infrastructure and academic programmes, the ability to serve as a regional hub; geographic representation among students and exceptional faculty across the four core competencies of natural, health, and social sciences and management; and a time-line and business plan for financial sustainability when funding ends in three years.

A Global Master's in Development Practice Secretariat, supported by MacArthur and based at Columbia University's Earth Institute, will help manage the MDP network of universities, develop an open-source repository for the MDP curriculum and other teaching materials, and offer an online global classroom on sustainable development for students worldwide.

**Source:** /Times of India/19 July 2010

### **It's tiny at the top**

*Inviting foreign universities is a bad idea, partnerships are better* Kapil Sibal's plan to build more world-class universities, top-quality research institutions, expanding the number of IITs... it isn't going to work

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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.

### **Most significant changes in the higher education sector**

The most significant change over the past 30 years is what the Europeans call '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 20 years most of the developments in higher education would be in China and India because the two countries still enroll only a modest percentage of the age group for higher education. In China now, it is 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 two largest sources of students for the U.S. 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, Bangalore...all are world class. If you look at China, Korea, Taiwan they have more top-quality institutions. Why? Some elements of corruption in the (Indian) 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 cannot get quality education. 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 per cent 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 and weeds 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 are 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. Kapil Sibal (HRD

Minister) 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 and such institutions which are discussed as being among the better institutions here, are not there high up in the global rankings.

### **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 enrollments.

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.

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/19 July 2010

### **Time to focus on improving teaching methods**

Indian faculty is good at theory but doesn't have the exposure to relate theory to practice and application, according to Krishna Vedula.

Thumbs up: Problem lies not with the students but in the teaching methods as Indian students are brilliant, feels Krishna Vedula, Professor at the University of Massachusetts in USA.

Indian engineering education suffers from quality with less than 25 per cent of students actually termed employable by different agencies including the NASSCOM reports. But the State government has recently admitted that not more than 10 per cent of engineering graduates are actually employable and in fact, constituted a committee of senior academics to suggest measures to improve employability.

But the problem lays not with the students but in the teaching methods, feels Krishna Vedula, a Professor of Engineering at the University of Massachusetts at Lowell, USA.

### **Quality engineers**

Agreeing that Indian students are brilliant, Prof. Vedula says it is time to concentrate on improving teaching methods for better delivery of education. After all, creating quality engineers is important to find solutions to the global challenges facing humanity such as energy, environment, health and communications.

As a teacher who understands the importance of teaching, he feels that to keep the student's interest in the classroom and thereby in the subject, it is necessary to make the lecture interesting. And there are proven methods and strategies that are adopted across the developed countries. To bring these techniques into India for improving teaching standards in engineering, Prof. Vedula with the help of several teachers and institutions started the Indo US Collaboration for Engineering Education (IUCEE) in 2007.

The response has been encouraging and growing since then. In the first year 25 U.S. experts conducted workshops for 600 Indian faculty at Infosys campus in Bangalore. In the second year also 25 experts from USA conducted workshop for another 600 faculty. The 1,200 faculty from India have gone back and given workshops to other faculties and impacted more than 3,000 faculty and one lakh students in the last two years.

### **Training expenses**

Infosys bore the expenses for training in the initial years and Prof. Vedula says it was time colleges shared the expenses as they benefitted from the programme. In the third year the IUCEE built a consortium of 22 colleges all over India and 37 workshops were conducted covering 1,128 Indian faculty.

He says these faculties will continue to be mentored by U.S. faculty so that they can improve the learning outputs of students in their colleges. The focus, Prof. Vedula says is on practical training. He feels Indian faculty is good at theory but doesn't have exposure to relate theory to practice and application.

The advantage is that core engineering curriculum is virtually the same all over the globe. US professors are good at engaging students through their lectures and these skills are being passed on to India teachers.

Some of the key strategies include making students participate and infusing team work where students are made to work in groups to find solutions.

### **Growth rate**

The exponential growth of engineering colleges has also led to shortage of good teachers. Colleges are forced to recruit teachers without PhD. Such teachers are bound to lack not only teaching skills but also subject knowledge, feels Prof. Vedula, who was in India recently to participate in workshop organised at Shri Vishnu Engineering College for Women, Bhimavaram, West Godavari. But he sees a positive change in near future with more and more colleges showing interest.

**Source:** /hindu.com/19 July 2010

### **Choosing the right-fit schools**

Selective colleges in the US can broadly be categorised into three types — the large public universities, mid-sized private universities and the small liberal arts and science colleges.

Families in India are usually aware of the first two types but aren't well informed about the last category. Liberal arts colleges can, however, be perfect for students who want to be in a small, undergraduate institution, looking for a small, intimate campus and tiny class sizes. If you like being part of a close-knit campus community and want more people to be personally invested in your learning goals then these colleges can provide the perfect environment for your higher education and for realising your career goals.

Alas, these colleges don't show up on popular ranking websites. So if you are ready to go beyond the typical 'Top-ranked national universities,' you'll soon discover why so many students swear by their experience at these undergraduate focused liberal arts colleges, where they've found the right kind of intellectual stimulation, care and personal attention.

Go ahead and use tabulated rankings as a starting point for your college search but don't end it there, for soon you'll find that rankings are irrelevant and not at all an indication of what kind of college experience is right for you.

Says Tanay Warerkar, a sophomore at Sarha Lawrence College, NY ([www.slc.edu](http://www.slc.edu)), "Having interacted with students from different universities one comes to realise that while rankings are important they certainly aren't a topic broached on a conversational basis. Each school is identified by the caliber of the students it produces and that might not necessarily be reflective of the ranking of that institution, so I think it has more to do with whether the school has produced students that are now on the public radar."

Madhavika Bajoria, a student I've worked with, wrote to me about her college search when she was in high school and then shared her experiences at Bryn Mawr ([www.brynmaur.edu](http://www.brynmaur.edu)), an all-women's liberal arts college in Pennsylvania. Bajoria is currently considering a double major in economics and international studies and a minor in Spanish. "Geographic location played a very important part in my selection process. I wanted to be near a city on the coasts. This turned out to be the right decision for me. I always knew I'd major in economics but Spanish became a serious academic interest only after I took a language class for fun and ended up wanting to do it for the remaining undergrad years. Similarly, international studies are a unique programme, which draws from aspects of economics, political science, philosophy and language and culture studies. This was a perfect programme for me since it ties in all my interests and allows me to explore all of them. The general education requirements have been a little bit of an annoyance. I wish there were fewer but at the same time I wouldn't change any of the classes I chose to take."

Compact sizes too matter. Says Anshu Singh from Clark University, "the average class size of my intro classes was close to 22. That worked perfectly for me as I had a personal rapport with all my professors, and even my Korean economics professor knew me by my very Indian name."

"Currently I am pursuing a double major in economics and environmental science and policy. I had gone undecided, but my faculty advisor and the liberal arts system of education helped me immensely in making the right decision."

When asked about lack of diversity in some of the liberal arts schools, Warkerkar explains, "I was keen on going to a school that did not have a large international student population, and I'm glad I made the decision of choosing Sarah Lawrence. I often find that Indian students tend to stick together and get trapped in a bubble that limits their interaction to the people from their country. I believe this greatly detracts from the overall college experience. I didn't want to travel all the way to America to solely interact with students from my country. Interacting with American students and others from different countries has been an enriching educational experience, and I would go to the extent of saying that it has changed the way I perceive life. However, having a small international population or for that matter having a largely white student body does have its drawbacks. While I have personally never faced any problems, people from smaller ethnic groups seem to feel threatened at times, and this has resulted in tensions on a few occasions. Such issues often have a magnified impact at a smaller school."

These colleges also give you the liberty to change courses. Amar Sarkar, currently mathematics major at Grinnell college ([www.grinnell.edu](http://www.grinnell.edu)), began as a psychology and economics double major. "These interests change with time and that's no surprise. One of the main

advantages of the liberal arts system is the ability to choose your major field and change your choice while you're there. As far as general education is concerned, a variety of courses in different disciplines helps cultivate the skills (critical reading and thinking, analytical skills, research skills and most importantly, writing skills) that the college is trying to teach you," says Sarkar. Rather than looking at the size of the student body as a whole, you should look at student to faculty ratio. "At Grinnell, it is 7:1, which is quite impressive. For undergraduate education, aim for a smaller class size so that you can learn the skills (note, I'm saying skills, not content) to the best of your ability," advises Sarkar.

Another important criterion while searching for colleges is to assess the personality of the student body each represents, a point often overlooked by students and parents in India. Says Bajoria, "Coming from all-girls high school in Kolkata with little diversity, my perception of diversity has undergone a complete change, but for the better. The student body at Bryn Mawr is very liberal, outspoken and opinionated. They are also extremely accepting. I really like the intellectual drive and curiosity that I see in most students."

"However, being an all-women's institution, there is also a tendency towards non-conformity for the sake of non-conformity, which I don't really like because it's insincere."

"A lot of gender stereotypes are played up in order to allow male-bashing and militant feminism, which can also get very annoying. But besides that, I generally admire a lot of students I go to school with!"

Working with several students for almost a decade, I've seen how quickly their perspective on liberal arts colleges has changed from the time of the application to when they come to college. Many are not even sure they would apply to some of the highly-ranked national universities they would have died to get into initially.

Source: New Delhi [/hindustantimes.com](http://hindustantimes.com)/20 July 2010

### **Merely creating institutes not enough**

The inaugural session of East Zone Vice-Chancellors' Conference exposed the stark reality as well as brighter areas for higher education in the country.

Raising the basic questions jeopardising higher education in the country, vice-chairman, UGC, New Delhi, Prof Ved Prakash said the country needed educational leaders who were visionaries and self-motivated. "We need to understand that creating a few institutes of excellence, like IITs and IIMs, will not serve the much broader perspective of universalisation of education in the country. There is a need for introspection to see where these universities stand after 63 years of independence," he pointed out.

Referring to recent figures, including the UN Development Programme (UNDP) report that suggested that the country had slipped from 130th rank to 134th rank in human development index (HDI), the senior office-bearer of UGC also drew attention towards startling report of the Union

rural development ministry that said more than half the population (51 per cent) in the country was living below poverty level (BPL), enough to reflect the gravity of the situation. Even, issues like not adhering to common schooling system and prolonging reservation in higher education needed introspection, he added.

Emphasising on the need for capacity building and developing entrepreneurship skills in students, president, Association of Indian Universities (AIU), New Delhi, Prof. MD Tiwari called for more flexibility in higher education, including promotion of multi-disciplinary approach in the system. "The young brilliant minds are still not opting for basic science education at higher level and it is a big cause for concern. Similarly, shortage of quality teaching staff and inability in retaining qualified teachers also hampered higher education," he said.

Exploring brighter areas for higher education in the country, secretary general, AIU, Prof Beena Shah said the country was doing well in technical education, with over 1.5 lakh certified software engineers. "The increasing number of students going for higher education in the country has also made it the third largest in the world, besides opening new avenues like medical tourism that has become a two billion dollar industry," she said.

Students stage peaceful dharna

Drama unfolded on the inaugural day of the conference on Friday when a number of students of MGKV, representing the All-India Student Association (AISA), staged a demonstration after they were denied permission to meet UP Governor BL Joshi.

As per Nitesh Kumar, coordinator, AISA (MGKP unit), a group of students wanted to meet the chancellor to draw his attention towards the problems of a number of students, who had not been given marksheets even after declaration of results by university authorities. However, when the security guards and university officials did not allow the group to meet the chancellor, the students staged a peaceful protest on the university campus, he added.

**Source:** Varanasi /Times of India/23 July 2010

### President for strong school education system

Observing that youths can play a vital role in making India one of the largest economies and the most influential nations, President Pratibha Patil today said there was a need for strong school education system.

"Stronger the foundations of school education, the greater the possibilities of progress...Our country stands at the threshold of becoming one of the largest economies as well as one of the most influential countries in the world...it is the youth, who will play a critical role in taking India to its promised destiny," Ms. Patil said at a function to celebrate the golden jubilee founder's day of Sainik School Kunjpura here, about 140 km from Delhi.

Emphasising on the role of schools in nation's progress, she said, "Schools are the basic units of an educational system. Here, children spend the formative years of their life...The development of students at higher levels of education depends on the knowledge base and the value system acquired in school."

"...the quality of education imparted in schools, determines the nation's future. Therefore it is very necessary for schools to impart good education and make students understand the worthiness of discipline, integrity and doing their work with dedication."

The President said an effective education system is one that responds to the challenges of its time.

"In today's context, education should make students aware of their social and cultural milieu, so that they can contribute meaningfully to society...It should acquaint them with the marvels of science and technology... with a view to encourage them to develop a scientific temper...The education should enable the students to work intelligently and in a systematic manner," she said.

Stressing on the need of nurturing interest of students in a range of activities, Ms. Patil said, "This will not only promote their all round development, but also broaden their outlook... A broad set of skills will enhance their creative ability."

On the role of teachers in shaping children, she said, "Teachers must keep themselves abreast with the latest knowledge tools, so that they can guide their students to look at useful & meaningful information sources...Teachers should encourage children to examine and analyze everyday experiences and make them search for solutions to problems."

Describing the armed forces as the nation's pride, Ms. Patil said she is confident that all the students of the Sainik School would work towards in the creation of a new India and will be the instruments of change, a change that will bring prosperity, security and happiness in the community, the nation and the world.

Haryana Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda who was also present on the occasion said, impressed by the significant contribution made by the youth of Haryana in Defence Forces, the Central Government has sanctioned another sainik school in Rewari district.

Governor Jagannath Pahadia and former Army chief General Deepak Kapoor were among those present on the occasion.

Kunjpura Sainik School is one of the pioneer educational institutions established in the country on July 24, 1961 at the behest of the then defence minister V. K. Krishna Menon.

The primary aim of this institution is to prepare boys academically, physically and mentally for entry into the National Defence Academy.

**Source:** Karnal /thehindu.com/24 July 2010

### Scaling up teacher training

In order to ensure active participation of all Universities in a massive process of training, re-training and continuous capacity-building of teachers, HRD Ministry's Higher Education Department has constituted a Core Committee of Vice-Chancellors to evolve effective and unconventional strategies for scaling up teacher training.

This was stated by Prof VN Rajasekharan Pillai, Vice Chancellor, Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) in the monthly publication 'OPEN LETTER' of the University.

In the context of the Right to Education Act, a time-bound action plan is being formulated jointly by the National Council of Teacher Education (NCTE), IGNOU and State Education Departments to achieve targets, he said.

IGNOU has set up five Institutes of Competency Advancement of Teachers (ICAT) in the five geographic region of the country.

Technology-enhanced distance learning and the flexible Open University practices are the approaches being adopted in these institutes.

Such approaches are extensively and successfully used all over the world, both in the developed and highly populated developing countries.

Delivery of programmes, wholly or partially, through the flexible, distance learning mode, can alleviate shortages by eliminating or reducing the time and expenses invested in conventional college-based courses and also by making teacher trainees available earlier for service in the classrooms, Prof Pillai stated.

"Innovative approaches in the distance learning mode such as high-quality, self instructional multimedia and online materials and well-designed learner support systems for practicals and project work, can really reduce the deficit in training and retaining capacity of our country," he said. Learner-friendliness and flexibility are the attractive features of the Open University and distance education systems.

Facilitation of teaching-integrated learning for working teachers, by way of self-help faculty improvement modules, can also be achieved by distance education strategies, he added.

**Source:** New Delhi /[centralchronicle](#)/25 July 2010

### Address basics first

Can India achieve inclusive education with cheap computing devices, when a quarter of our 136 million primary school students (classes I-V) drop out every year for their inability to pay fees? Unfortunately, this is what our human resources development minister Kapil Sibal thinks. The role of technology in furthering the cause of education in India is a far-fetched idea when we fail to fulfil even the basic conditions of schooling. When most of our government-run schools in the villages don't even have basic infrastructure such as furnished classrooms,

blackboards and toilets, our officials are itching to bring in subsidised computing devices. These devices cannot compensate for our crumbling education infrastructure and absenteeism of teaching staff.

Look at the issue another way. Let's say the government actually succeeds in distributing low-cost computers to kids across the country, itself a charitable assumption. Computers are of little value without internet access. But how far is the internet available in backward and remote areas? Do they even have electricity, which needs to be at least intermittently available in order to power computers? Can we ensure maintenance of millions of computers across the country?

Many of the problems in the Indian education system are a result of political and administrative negligence. They cannot be addressed through technical fixes, which offer a convenient and superficially plausible short cut when we are unable to address the real problems affecting education. It's one thing to bring together IIT students and technical experts and have them rig up a cheap computer. It's quite another issue scaling this up so that the devices can be widely distributed throughout the country and loaded with useful educational software.

**Source:** New Delhi /Times of India/26 July 2010

### Quality in education: It's my legal right

While the efficacy of the Right to Education Act is being debated, the legislation has had an impact on marginalised sections of society.

Says Ashok Agarwal, advocate and advisor to a civil rights group, "When the Act came into force around four months ago, we were expecting a slow response from society since it takes time to spread awareness about any new legislation. But from April we have received 200 applications where children and their parents are demanding admission under the Right to Education Act; 70% are from the Muslim community and out of that, 90% of the applicants are women."

There are several reasons for this, but the main one seems to be the girls' desire to be educated and, hence, empowered. "The Muslim community especially in backward areas has finally risen to the fact that education empowers and more and more Muslim girls are coming forward to take education in the formal school system," adds Agarwal.

Samreen and Uzma Bano were denied admission by many government schools when they migrated to Delhi from Uttar Pradesh with their families four years ago. The desire to be economically independent prompted them to get enrolled in knitting and beauty courses. But they continued to dream about a formal education.

The RTE provided them with the right platform. "Muslim women feel that it is important to be economically independent and it can only happen through education. Many women have been fighting for their right to get educated. When we heard it is our right to get free and

compulsory education under the new legislation, we approached a lawyer for help," says Mona, maternal aunt of the Bano sisters.

Mona has been running from pillar-topost to get her nieces admitted in a school in New Ashok Nagar.

"When we approached a school, the authorities denied admission saying the girls are over the age limit," she says. "Running between school, lawyer and deputy director of education's office has left us exhausted and we have also spent a lot of money. But we know that it is an investment to get the girls educated. We will not give up till the girls are admitted in a school," she asserts. Agarwal says that the act empowers children in the age group between 6 and 14 years to get free and compulsory education in a neighbourhood school and the school cannot deny admission on any basis. "If it does, it is a contempt of court," he adds.

Another obstacle to the girls' education is the distance that they have to travel. "The MCD schools have started online screening for admission. If the seat is allotted in a school which is far from their house, the parents opt out of sending their daughters to school. We have received many applications where Muslim girls dropped out from school due to the distance and now are demanding admission in a nearby school under the RTE Act," says Agarwal.

Rizwana, after completing schooling at Holy Home Public School, which is up to class VIII, is seeking admission in a school at Khajuri Khas near her house. "The school has been denying admission on several grounds. We have obtained a school-leaving certificate and got it countersigned from the deputy education officer, but it is of no use. I want to study further but the authorities' attitude is discouraging," says Rizwana. However, Rizwana's mother is determined to get her daughter admitted in a school. "No matter how much money we have to spend, I want my daughters to study," she says.

"Farah, aged 6, is a special child. She was denied admission at Jehangirpuri MCD School on the grounds of non-availability of a special educator in the school. This is a violation of the RTE Act. Since section 3 of the Act provides for free and compulsory education and section 4 provides that a child aged above 6 years has the right to be admitted to an age-appropriate class," Agarwal informs. He says the determination among Muslim women is gathering momentum, but they need the support of the concerned authorities to make their dream come true.

**Source:** New Delhi /Times of India/26 July 2010

### Try out school vouchers

School vouchers should be an integral part of the Centre's plans to implement the Right to Education (RTE). For the state to spend gargantuan amounts on school education is fine, but to insist that the delivery too would be by the state is meaningless.

Surveys have shown that government teachers are absent from their schools and children cannot do simple arithmetic

or write small paragraphs after years of schooling. Reforms in governance are, therefore, a must. Designing a market in which schools would compete to attract students carrying school vouchers would complement administrative steps to improve governance and quality in the school system.

Once students have choice, they would vote with their feet, and schools without children should be closed down. Awareness of such a terminal destiny should help concentrate the minds of teachers who play hookey.

A voucher can surely be a tool to change the way governments fund education of the poor. However, no one size fits all as global experiments on school vouchers have shown mixed result. Countries like; US, Sweden, Denmark and Italy saw an improvement in the quality of education and more competition among public and private schools. In the Netherlands, however, vouchers led to ethnic segregation and had no significant impact on the achievement levels of students. And, in England, it did not trigger competition among schools.

The success (or failure) will largely depend on the design of the scheme. Now, state governments led by Delhi, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh are experimenting with school vouchers, taking a page from School Choice, launched by the Centre for Civil Society in Delhi.

An assessment of the Delhi project on vouchers, covering 408 students, showed that a majority of the beneficiaries switched over from government to private schools. Parents were happy the learning progress of their children, the teachers and the standard of discipline. The RTE provides a huge opportunity for other states to foster public private partnership in education, along with fundamental reforms in governance.

**Source:** /Economic Times/31 July 2010

## RESOURCE

### National Policy on skill development

The Government has already formulated a National Policy on Skill Development (NSDP) which was approved on 23rd February, 2009.

The policy envisions a road map for skill development in the country with a mission to empower all individuals through improved skills which are nationally and internationally recognized so as to gain access to decent employment and ensure India's competitiveness in the global skills market. Following are the objectives of the NSDP:

- Create opportunities for all to acquire skills throughout life, and especially for youth, women and disadvantaged groups.
- Promote commitment by all stakeholders to own skill development initiatives.

- Develop a high-quality skilled workforce / entrepreneur relevant to current and emerging employment market needs.
- Enable the establishment of flexible delivery mechanism that respond to the characteristics of a wide range of needs of standards.
- Enable effective coordination between different ministries, the Centre and the States and public and also private skill providers.

NSDP has set a target for skill development of 500 million persons by year 2022 by involving all stake holders through concerned Ministries and Departments.

***Reasons for formulating NSDP are as under:***

The Eleventh Five-Year Plan stresses that the ability to sustain labour-intensive growth depends crucially on the expansion of skill capabilities and knowledge as driving forces of economic growth.

Potentially, the target group for skill development comprises all those in the labour force, including those entering the labour market for the first time (around 12.8 million annually), those employed in the organized sector (26.0 million) and those working in the unorganized sector (433 million) as on 2004-05. The current capacity of the skill development programs is 3.85 million.

India has the advantage of 'demographic dividend'. Harnessing the demographic dividend through appropriate skill development efforts would provide an opportunity to achieve inclusion and also productivity within the country as well as to meet the global skill shortages.

The policy aims at empowering all individuals through improved skills, knowledge and internationally comparable qualifications to keep Indian skilled manpower at par with skilled manpower of other developing/developed countries.

Shri Mallikarjun Kharge, Minister of Labour and Employment gave this information in reply to a question in the Lok Sabha.

**Source:** New Delhi /pib.nic.in/27 July 2010

## Contribute

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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](mailto:aserf@apeejay.edu)

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