



Announcements

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

Applications from the eligible scholars are invited for the Award of the year 2010. [Click here](#) to download the prescribed format along with the terms and conditions.

Apeejay Education Society announces the opening of Apeejay Stya University

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

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

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

Partnership

Dear Partners,

The Apeejay Stya Education Research Foundation (ASERF) invites news, articles, resource material, opinions and analyses on relevant educational issues that can be highlighted in our by-monthly e-bulletins and on the ASERF portal.

We request if you could spare a few moments of your valuable time to have a look at our website and guide us on our regular initiatives.

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ASPECT**Education: A new vision for the future**

“As a nation we are now poised to take some historic steps, collectively, to empower our children and thereby, our entire nation. As the Human Resource Development Minister of the country, it is my duty and obligation to ensure that our children are placed at the centre of the ambitious education reforms programme embarked upon by my Ministry. My vision for the future is that of a wholly Child Centric Education system. We cannot afford to be the slaves of the past. We must keep ourselves in synch with the processes of change sweeping through the globe. We need to learn from the past, build on it and create opportunities for the future of our present children as well as the future of the unborn ones. We would do well to recall, the very insightful and perceptive statement made by Shri M.C. Chagla, the then Education Minister of India, in 1964, *“Our Constitution fathers did not intend that we set up hovels, put student there, given untrained teachers, give them bad textbooks, no playgrounds and say, we have complied with Article 45 and the primary education is expanding ... what they meant was that real education should be given to our children between the ages of 6 and 14.*

When the Right to Education Bill was passed, there was a general euphoria that eventually, after 62 years of Independence, we have realized the goal set forth by our founding fathers in Part 4 of the Constitution. But I believe that while it is easy to pass legislation, it is not so easy to implement it. The difficult part of the journey begins from there. Implementing this Act in its letter and spirit is going to be a challenge for all of us. When the Act was passed, there were lot of misgivings; how will it work? How will the CCE (*Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation*) work? But it has worked! And it is working! The CBSE has made 10th exam optional, and the results of 10th Boards this year were better than the last year’s results.

Implementing the Right to Education (RTE) Act in letter and in spirit is a task we have committed ourselves to. As per the projections, about Rs.1,50,000/- crore would be required for implementing the RTE Act for all the children between age of 6 years to 14 years. It is estimated that there will be a shortfall of Rs. 60,000/- crore. This huge challenge has to be faced by the nation collectively. Harmonising the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) with the RTE Act would be an obvious priority.

The most precious of all resources available to any country is its children and it is incumbent upon us to ensure that *our children get all the opportunities* they need for their physical and intellectual growth. In order to ensure this, we need to look at the substance of our education system. What content needs to be delivered to the child? How do we equip our children to cope with and succeed in a knowledge intensive and innovation hungry globe? How do we reform the examination system that only tests the rote learning, forgetting altogether that semantic memory is far

more crucial for intellectual growth and creative vision? How do we re-orient our text-books and transform our pedagogical methods in order to ensure that the statement made by Sri Chagla is rendered irrelevant at least now? I for one, envision an education system that harnesses the creative instincts and enables the child to interpret the world on his own so as to grow intellectually and blossom into an enlightened citizen. *This is an investment that we must make now, in order to ensure that the future generation is bequeathed by us with an enriched social capital and not a depleted one.*

My Ministry has initiated a slew of measures to translate this vision into reality. We have set for ourselves an ambitious *reform agenda*. Expansion, inclusion and excellence are the three non-negotiable principles of this reform agenda. After having committed to the children a right to free and compulsory education, HRD Ministry has taken upon itself the task of reforming the content and substance of the education imparted to children. A common core curriculum, essential for removing the disparities of syllabi (that necessitate different entrance exams catering to different boards) has already been devised by the Council of Boards of School Education (COBSE) in India for science and maths subjects. The Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) in its meeting held on 19th June, 2010 has endorsed the proposal for implementing a core-curriculum in the subjects of science and mathematics by all higher secondary boards in the country from the academic session 2011-12. The preparation of core curriculum for commerce has also been endorsed in the same meeting.

This will provide an opportunity to children from economically weaker sections, which presently are not able to avail of coaching and get through the current system of entrance exams... If you have a core curriculum, it will be easier for all the states to hold exams and evaluate academic performance through the similar, if not the same, criteria. However, the attempts to *evolve core curricula* should be no means is construed as an attempt to undermine the autonomy of different Boards. *It is an attempt to universalize quality, just the way we have universalized the quantity, by means of the RTE Act.*

Another area which has to be tackled is the fact of a student sitting for 15-20 different exams after class XII and then figuring out where he/she is going to get admission after all those exams. We must have, I think a *common entrance test* for all students after Class XII. This common test should serve to test general awareness and aptitude of a child. While Class XII board examinations would test the students’ knowledge of the subject, this test could evaluate the raw intelligence and aptitude of the student... A *rationalized equalization method* can be worked out to equate the raw scores obtained in Board exams. This would eliminate the need for the student to appear in exams after exams. We can think of an all India merit list based on a combined score of these two tests. Then it is merit that decides where the child would go for further



studies. *This merit would be a pure merit, not a “merit-cum-means” merit.*

In an effort to reduce examination stress, the Ministry is considering merging the Central Board of Secondary Education –conducted All India Pre-Medical Test (AIPMT) and the All India Engineering Entrance Examination (AIEEE). The logic is simple; both sets of examinations have common subjects – physics and chemistry, while those opting for medical course have to appear for an additional biology paper and the engineering stream for a mathematics paper. However, if a student wants to appear for both streams, at present he/she needs to take separate entrance tests, and has to sit for the physics and chemistry tests twice. This duplication is unnecessary and stressful. Merging the two examinations would resolve this problem. My ministry would start consultations on this proposal very soon.

No country can afford to produce just doctors, with no paramedics: just engineers, with no draughtsmen and just lawyers, with no paralegals. Vocationalization of education, a goal enunciated in the National Policy on Education (NPE), still remains elusive. It is neither integrated with mainstream education, nor properly emphasized. *We are in dire need for a national framework on vocational education, so that the parameters of each vocation are identified and benchmarked.* There are 220 million children in schools in this country. Even after increasing the gross enrolment ratio (GER) to 30 per cent, we still will have 160 million children who will not go for conventional or professional higher education. We need to think how to harness their genius by evolving a national policy on vocational education. I want to set up a National Institute for Assessment and Evaluation for schools which would serve as an advisory institution to help school boards seeking such help in assessment and evaluation. The advices would not be binding but would help benchmark institutes (and diplomas) with global standards. An inter-ministerial group is also contemplated, which would include representatives of State Governments also, to develop guidelines for such a National Framework.

My Ministry is also working on a *curriculum framework* for value education. Examinations are only a gateway to higher education whereas values last and guide a lifetime. Ethics and values play a larger role in generating social capital than mere bland knowledge transmission. Value education should be so integrated with the entire education spectrum that we not only produce talent, but also good and caring human beings with a sense of responsibility towards society and the nation. It should begin with the impressionable minds and mould them with *fine imprints of ethical and moral conduct, made inviolable principles of conduct in public or private life, or follow the dictates of what Immanuel Kant called “the categorical imperative”.*

It is my firm belief that when teachers are taken care of, students benefit the most. *We are actively working on a scheme for starting insurance and housing schemes for 60 lakh teachers of the country, subject to financial approvals.*

The scheme would be part of my ministry’s effort to improve the offering that students are given in the education system. This is part of our efforts to make the system child-centric. The insurance schemes will require financial contributions from the Centre, the States and the teachers. The group housing scheme will I imagine be administered at the central level but will not require financial contribution from the Centre or the State Governments. The health and life insurance schemes are proposed to cost far less for teachers as far as premium is concerned compared to premium for individual schemes or even schemes run at the state level.

Higher education sector too is poised for momentous reforms. My Ministry is in the process of formulating the structure for an overarching body for higher education that would be responsible for higher education policy and planning in the country. The reform agenda for higher education includes imparting complete autonomy to universities for devising courses, cross fertilization of courses, research oriented universities etc.,. The proposed National Commission for Higher Education and Research (NCHER) is intended to promote autonomy of universities by devolving powers hitherto exercised by the existing regulatory bodies, prevent fragmentation of education, promote interdisciplinary pursuit and creation of knowledge, accord a level playing field through norm-based funding for all universities – Central or State, grant powers to States to participate in policy making at the national level through representation in the decision making processes of the proposed Commission. An integrated approach to the whole process of learning is what is contemplated.

I am also open to the idea of Indian universities *collaborating with foreign universities* or with the corporate sector. *Existing in majestic isolation, without a creative exchange of ideas and shared resources, is neither going to serve education nor the industry.* Corporate sector has been showing increasing interest in education as they require trained manpower. A bill to consider permitting Foreign Educational Institutions is already introduced in the Parliament. In order to prevent the unscrupulous elements from exploiting students, a Bill to prevent and prohibit malpractices has also been introduced in the Parliament. Same way, in order to take care of the education related litigation, be it between employees or employers; students of institution and the institution or the regulatory body and the institution, a Bill to set up National and State Educational Tribunals has also been introduced.

I am also shortly going to introduce a novel idea for furthering the cause of education. It involves dematerializing the academic certificates. My Ministry is formulating the proposed National Academic Depository Bill, 2010 for creating and *maintaining a national electronic database of academic records and awards* at no cost to Central or State Government. It mandates academic institutions – universities, higher educational institutions, CBSE and States Boards of education to entrust academic awards with authorized Depository to be appointed under the legislation for secure storage, authenticated access,

online verification and efficient retrieval while ensuring confidentiality, fidelity and authenticity. *This proposal, once materialized, would make the existence of fake degree or absence of genuine ones (either lost or not retrievable) a relic of past.*

The country today needs learning process to transcend the existing frontiers of disciplines and explore hitherto unexplored territories, in order to venture into a spirit of innovation which perches the country on to the commanding heights of a knowledge dominated, innovation intensive global arena."

Source: New Delhi [/pib.nic.in/](http://pib.nic.in/) 12 August 2010

NEWS

Government plans uniformity in commerce education

The Union ministry for human resource and development is chalking out a plan to bring uniformity in commerce education across all the schools in the country. "The core curriculum for science is ready and we are now working on developing a common commerce curriculum for all school boards," said Union HRD minister Kapil Sibal, on the sidelines of the Indo-US summit on higher education in Mumbai.

The HRD ministry is planning to push with a common curriculum on maths and science across schools in the country as well, which will be followed soon by commerce. The ministry hopes to implement the science and maths curriculum from 2011. The Council of School Board of Education (COBSE), the apex body for all school boards and councils in the country, will spearhead the implementation of the common commerce curriculum.

Addressing the three-day summit, organised by the Indo-American Society, the HRD minister re-emphasised on the country's need to have 800 more universities to take its gross enrolment ratio (GER) to 30% by 2020 from 12.4% at present.

He underlined the fact that Indian students going abroad for education is not a sound economic model, rather bringing education to Indian students is the right way. "Manufacturing and services sector have outsourced for higher output per dollar. Similarly, in education this model can work," said Mr. Sibal.

However, he added that no foreign university will be allowed to take back the profit to their home countries. "I am expecting the Harvards and MITs to do what they do in their home country—put the earning back into the institution and not pass them to shareholders," said the HRD minister.

The HRD ministry is also planning to give a big push to increase employability in the country by introducing vocational training and education courses right at the higher secondary level in the country.

"We are going to introduce huge range of courses in the 10+2 (higher secondary) level which will be in tandem with the trade that thrives in that locality," he said. "We will take inputs from the state governments but the standards will be set at the national level."

Source: Mumbai [/EconomicTimes/](http://EconomicTimes/) 1 August 2010

Indigenous research projects

The Government has taken a number of steps to rejuvenate indigenous research in the country. About 3600 extramural Research and Development projects per year were sanctioned by the Government in the first two years of the XI Plan in universities/colleges, national laboratories/institutes and other academic and research institutions in the country. The Government has recently established a Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB) in the country as an autonomous body through an Act of Parliament. The creation of SERB, apart from significantly enhancing the level of basic research funding, shall also impart the necessary autonomy, flexibility and speed in shaping the research programmes and delivery of funds to researchers. The launch of new initiatives Nano Mission, Mega Facilities, Open Source Drug Discovery, Network Projects, National Biotechnology Development Strategy etc. in the XI Plan period demonstrates the commitment of the Government to encourage and promote indigenous research in a better scientific environment.

Several enabling mechanisms especially in the socio-economic development sector are put in place in the XI Plan period. These are aimed at reaching technology to the weaker sections of the society so that they derive benefit in terms of enhanced income, reduced drudgery and in general an improved quality of life. The programmes worked out for the XI Plan period include waste management for value addition and income generation to rural people; water technology initiative; solar energy research initiative; setting up Rural/Women Technology Parks; development of modified filature for silk spinning; setting up of sanitary napkin production units; empowerment of Scheduled Caste community through resources management and technology transfer and empowerment etc.

This information was given by Sh. Prithviraj Chavan, Minister of State for Science & Technology and Earth Sciences, PMO, Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions and Parliamentary Affairs in reply to a written question in Rajya Sabha recently.

Source: New Delhi [/pib.nic.in/](http://pib.nic.in/) 2 August 2010

Role shift: Parents to screen schools

With Delhi Public School, Gurgaon, throwing open the nursery admission process from Monday, parents have started pulling their socks and preparing for the race ahead. DPS Gurgaon will be the first school in the NCR to start the sale of prospectus and registration forms for admission in nursery for the session 2011-2012.

Nursery admission process starts in NCR; DPS, Gurgaon, first off block, to issue prospectus today. Anika Awasthi, a corporate professional, has started visiting various schools in and around Gurgaon to make sure her only son Shiv goes to the "right" school.

"Schools screen parents, so why can't parents screen the schools before seeking admission for the child," says Awasthi. A resident of Nirvana Country in Gurgaon, she says, "It is tough to get admission in schools, we are doing our best. I went to the Sun City School and Heritage School over the weekend. I am also planning to go to other schools that allow 'walk-throughs'. I ask them questions about the philosophy of the school, about the teacher-student ratio etc."

In Delhi, the sale of forms will begin in December or January as per the Directorate of Education (DoE) officials. Last year, the DoE had asked all schools across the Capital to follow a uniform calendar for sale and admission process. But in the National Capital Region, schools start selling forms from August.

"I will be applying for the admission of my son to those schools that will ensure the holistic development of my child. I want to make the best decision for my child," says Awasthi.

Sumit Vohra, creator of the blog admissionsnursery.com, says, "There is a certain anxiety among parents this year regarding certain issues like screening, age etc. Parents have started making preparations."

The RTE obstacle: Meanwhile, with the implementation of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, according to which any screening at the time of admissions is banned, schools are now in a tight spot. "It is going to be a difficult situation for us," said V K Kuriakose, Principal of the St Thomas School at Indirapuram in Ghaziabad. The school will start the sale of forms in November. "If a school gets 900 applications and has only 150 seats to offer, what will the school do in such a situation."

Private unaided schools are worried as the entry level for most of the schools is nursery and they cannot refuse any child. The Act also applies to "admission of a child in the pre-primary classes". Section 13 (1) of the RTE Act reads, "No school or person shall, while admitting a child, collect any capitation fee and subject the child or his or her parents or guardian to any screening procedure. If a school subjects a child to screening procedure, it shall be punishable with a fine up to Rs 25,000 for the first contravention and Rs 50,000 for each subsequent contraventions," the Act says.

In Delhi, the National Progressive School's Conference (NPSC) too is mulling this issue. S K Bhattacharya, president of the Action Committee for the Private Recognised Schools, says, "This is going to be a big problem. There will be no option but to go for the draw of lots." He adds that "first come first serve" basis will "lead to corruption. Parents might bribe the schools for a seat."

Appeal filed: The Action Committee has already appealed the High Court to look into the matter. "We met Education Minister Arvinder Singh Lovely and told him that this is going to create problems. The points system was working satisfactorily," he says. As per the points system, admission was granted on the basis of certain criteria like distance from the school, siblings, minority, girl child etc.

Ashok Agarwal, lawyer and president All India Parents' Association says, "The Delhi government needs to bring the points system in conformity with the RTE Act. According to the RTE, there will be no screening. School can now go for the draw of lots."

For admission under the 25 per cent quota for the Economically Weaker Section, it has already been decided that there will be a draw of lots. "The minority schools can have separate application for the minority and non-minority though," says Agarwal.

Source: [/education.in.msn.com](http://education.in.msn.com)/2 August 2010

Common MBBS entrance from next year

The Union Health Ministry is set to introduce a single entrance test for under graduate medical courses in the country from the next academic session.

Proposed by the Medical Council of India (MCI) last month, the ministry is learnt to have recently given an in principle approval to start a "national eligibility-cum-entrance test for admission to MBBS course". The move will replace over 17 pre-medical tests (PMTs) conducted all over the country for over 35,000 undergraduate seats. According to senior officials in the ministry, the common test will bring in uniformity and common standards in the country.

"There is a need to start such a test to usher in uniformity and common standards. There have been complaints that medical colleges were resorting to all sorts of wrongdoings to fill up the seats," said an official. As of now, every state has its own rules for the medical entrance tests. In Gujarat, for instance, students are enrolled for the MBBS course on the basis of marks obtained in the senior secondary class.

It is expected that the test will be conducted by the CBSE, which conducts an all-India PMT for a chunk of MBBS seats in government colleges.

The rank obtained in the test will form the basis for admission to all medical colleges. There are about 300 medical colleges in the country, of which about 120 conduct their own exams. Admission to others is based on the PMTs conducted by state boards, CBSE and the armed forces.

Dr Devi Shetty, member, board of governors in the MCI, said the single entrance test will help reduce the stress levels of medical aspirants. "It is not possible for students to take all the PMTs. At times, there is a clash between two colleges having exam on the same day. The single entrance test will help tide over all these problems," he said.

Source: [/education.in.msn.com](http://education.in.msn.com)/3 August 2010



Centre tells SC it has power to de-recognise deemed universities

The Centre on Tuesday told the Supreme Court that it was well within its power under UGC rules to de-recognise the 44 deemed universities for allegedly failing to maintain requisite quality education. Solicitor General Gopal Subramaniam, appearing before a Bench of Justices Dalveer Bhandari and Deepak Verma, said that under the UGC Act, the Commission was empowered to accord the deemed status to universities.

"The power to accord recognition of deemed status included the power to de-recognise them" for failing to meet the standards, he submitted before the Bench.

Later, senior counsel KK Venugopal assailed the Centre's proposal to de-recognise the 44 universities as illegal on the ground that such a power was vested only with UGC.

He questioned the very constitution of the Professor PN Tondon Committee which had recommended de-recognition of the universities. The arguments would resume on Wednesday.

The review committee headed by Professor PN Tondon had earlier recommended derecognition of the 44 institutes across the country on the ground that they had failed to meet the standards required for sustaining the status of a "deemed" university.

According to the universities, Professor Tondon himself was heading a deemed university and it was not appropriate for him to head the high-powered committee which sought de-recognition of the aggrieved universities.

The apex court had earlier directed the Centre to put on the internet the recommendations of the Tondon Committee and the Task Force and asked the aggrieved universities to file their response on the Centre's decision to de-recognise them.

Source: New Delhi /[Hindustan Times](#)/3 August 2010

Lapse may deprive engineering students of fee waiver

The Directorate of Technical Education (DTE) seems to be haunted by controversies this year. The latest to be put in trouble are the engineering students.

The AICTE in its information brochure has mentioned the tuition fee waiver scheme (TFWS) for economically weaker sections of the society. Under the scheme, the student need not pay tuition fees for the entire four-year duration of the course. The criteria is the annual family income of the student's parents should be below Rs 2.5 lakh per annum.

The scheme was made available in the government as well as private colleges of the state. However, during filling up of preference forms on the website, the TFWS code for private institutes was not available. Thousand of poor students would have been benefited had this scheme been made available for private colleges as well.

"My brother gave up his chances of gaining entry into good colleges to take admission in Ramdeobaba Engineering College. Now he has been denied admission there, leaving

no hope for us," said Abhishek Vyas, a bank employee. He blamed the DTE for this blunder.

Joint director for technical education KK Dhote refused to comment. However, a senior official from the DTE blamed AICTE for not giving them the permission to upload the required data leading to this blunder.

The information brochure of the AICTE and also their official website clearly mentions the college choice code which is required at the time of filling up the mandatory online preference form.

Next to it is mentioned the TFWS choice code for all branches of colleges which implies that these colleges offer admissions under it.

A large number of students applied and were taken aback to find out that the choice code under TFWS could not be submitted. Several students have left their chance of admission in reputed colleges as they were confident about getting admission in these colleges under the TFWS scheme.

Such students and their parents are now facing hardships in getting admission and are made to suffer because of the slip-ups of the competent authority.

Vyas, brother, who was depending on this scheme, withdrew admission from College of Engineering, Pune, and VJTI, Mumbai, thinking he would get admission in Ramdeobaba Engineering College in Nagpur, which was listed in the TFWS choice code.

Vyas said that initially they were happy to hear of this scheme. Considering the saving, he told his brother to back out of other colleges and apply for colleges under this scheme. He was certain that his brother would get admission in RKNEC as admissions were to be granted on merit basis.

To their bad luck, the college has now backed out and is refusing to give admissions under this scheme.

However, Deotale's call details reveal that from July 28 onwards, she had continuously received calls from the PSI's number, but she did not answer the calls. On July 31 too she received a call from the same number and after that she consumed poison, said Lanjewar.

The family claimed that Deotale's behaviour had changed after she came into contact with the PSI. "She hardly used to eat at home. She had even stopped drinking water from the house and used to bring water from outside," said her mother Anusaya.

Deotale was reportedly so involved with the sub-inspector's family that she kept their family photo as her computer wallpaper. Very often, she used to stay over at the cop's house. "Whenever the sub-inspector's wife was not in the city, she used to stay at his place. First we excused her on the grounds that cops have night duty, but later we came to know that she was lying to us," added the mother.

They also alleged that she used to inform the PSI before leaving for duty. The family also said that beginning last

year; Deotale had stopped giving her salary to the family members. When asked about it, she refused to answer.

The Deotale family said, "We want the PSI to be punished at any cost, no matter how powerful he is. We will approach the commissioner, if the local cops refuse to cooperate with us."

Source: Nagpur /[Times of India](#)/3 August 2010

Women in Scientific Research

The Government is implementing a scheme titled 'Women Scientists Scholarship Scheme- 'A' (Research in Basic and Applied Sciences) under the Department of Science and Technology, which is specifically aimed at providing opportunities to women scientists and technologists for pursuing research in frontier areas of Science and Engineering. This scheme especially encourages women scientists who have had breaks in their careers. It provides a launch pad for them to return to mainstream of Science and work as bench-level scientists in various fields of Science and Technology. About 850 women scientists have been able to re-enter mainstream science as a result of implementation of this scheme.

A Standing Committee constituted by the Department of Science and Technology to review the recommendations of the National Task Force for Women in Science and (i) recommend special measures to ensure growth of women scientists in their professional career and (ii) to monitor recommendations of government for facilitating appointment, working and promotion of women scientists in Science and Technology organizations as well as other general recommendations. Meanwhile, based on recommendation of the Task Force, all Aided Institutions of Department of Science and Technology have been advised to give suitable proposals to establish a state-of-art crèche facility and to build women residential block in institutions having more than 20 women scientists.

This information was given by Sh. Prithviraj Chavan, Minister of State for Science & Technology and Earth Sciences, PMO, Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions and Parliamentary Affairs in reply to a written question in Lok Sabha today.

Source: New Delhi /[pib.nic.in](#)/4 August 2010

CBSE for optional exam for Class X

The CBSE has decided to introduce an optional "proficiency test" in June 2011 for those students who will clear Class X in March 2011 on the new pattern of continuous and comprehensive evaluation (CCE) rather than traditional board examination.

"A large number of parents feel that with no examination, the new system would be all about fun and frolic. We are trying to explain to them that instead of this, the new system would do comprehensive evaluation of their child. After discussions with parents and students from various parts of the country, we realised that there are some students who get motivated by examination only. For all

such students, we will introduce an optional proficiency test, which will be conducted in June and will be voluntary," said CBSE chairman Vineet Joshi, who was at Millennium School here for a workshop meant to train CBSE principals about mentoring and monitoring under CCE in schools.

Joshi said soon the CBSE would release a circular to its schools to collect information about all such students.

"The pattern of the test would depend upon the number of requests we get. If the number of students opting for this test is not very large, we can go in for an online test. We can opt for centralised testing centres as well," he said.

The CBSE chairman said this test would have multiple choice type questions, where the students would just have to select answers. The students would also have the option to give the test in just one or any number of subjects that they wish to.

Source: Indian Express /[education.in.msn.com](#)/6 August 2010

National meet on professional education begins

Quality is the most important factor which can help the professional educational institutions in India survives in a globalised world, Union Minister for Overseas Indian Affairs Vayalar Ravi has said.

He was inaugurating the National Convention of the Federation of Associations of Managements of Unaided Professional Educational Institutions in India (FAMPEI) here in Kochi.

In order to enable the professional educational institutions to train the new generation, the government needs to support the institutions, instead of making unnecessary control on them, he said.

Cyriac Thomas, member, National Commission for Minority Education in India, who delivered the keynote address said it was quite unfortunate that in a state like Kerala, the self-financing professional college managements are often looked down upon as criminals and the contribution made by them, including setting up of colleges, providing quality education to the bright youngsters, and transforming them as the best assets of the society is considered a crime.

He said self-financing institutions could survive only if they bring in better quality.

It is a well-known fact that the government alone will not be able to provide enough facilities to meet the increasing demands. Only with the contribution of the private sector that the inadequacies can be met, he added.

Citing statistics, FAMPEI president GPC Nayar explained how the flow of funds to Kerala from expatriates had considerably increased, after the setting up of the new-generation professional colleges. Chief patron and founder president of FAMPEI V Malakonda Reddy, Secretary-general CI Abdul Rahiman, and regional vice-president Punnoose George also spoke.

The business session was conducted by Jose Kannanthanam, Romy Chacko and Venugopal C Govind.

Source: Kochi /[expressbuzz.com](#)/8 August 2010

UGC invites proposals from tech colleges for autonomy

The University Grants Commission (UGC) has invited proposals from technical colleges affiliated with Gautam Buddha Technical University (GBTU) and Maha Maya Technical University (MMTU) for autonomous status.

The UGC in a letter to Professor Kripa Shanker, Vice-Chancellor of GBTU, has asked him to tell the affiliated institutions to send the proposals for autonomous status by September 30.

Following that letter, the V-C has sent letters to all the 589 technical and management colleges affiliated with GBTU and MMTU universities to send their proposals if they fulfill the UGC conditions. The proposals would be first examined by university authorities and then selected proposals would be sent to the UGC.

The UGC would finally examine the proposals based on the set parameters. At present, only Harcourt Butler Technological Institute (HBTI) in Kanpur has the autonomous status.

“The proposals of only those colleges would be sent to the UGC which have performed well consistently in academic activities and have adequate infrastructure and skilled faculty to achieve higher academic standard,” said Kripa Shanker.

Source: Lucknow [/indianexpress.com](http://indianexpress.com)/8 August 2010

Vocationalisation to be brought into secondary education in a big way: Shri Kapil Sibal consultative committee meeting of HRD ministry held

Vocational Education is proposed to be made an important part of secondary education. In order to make the vocational skills imparted relevant to the student, it is proposed that training curriculum be flexible to be able to address skill sets of vocations peculiar to a region. This will make the vocational education in secondary education relevant and useful to students from economically weaker sections, and will also act as a support for the sustenance and development of handicraft industries. This was stated by the Union Minister for Human Resource Development, Shri Kapil Sibal while addressing the meeting of the Consultative Committee of Parliament attached to the Ministry of Human Resource Development, last evening. The subject of the meeting was ‘Universalisation of Secondary Education’.

Shri Kapil Sibal also underlined the need to undertake geospatial mapping of the states with regard to the unavailability primary, secondary and higher education institutions in these states and match the availability with the geographical data on children population. This will give the government the information for setting up institution as per the requirement, so that large areas are not left without schools and colleges, and in contrast some areas are clustered with schools/colleges. This mapping will also help students on exercising the choice of institutions for study.

During the meeting, the Department of School Education and Literacy gave a presentation on the programme of the government for the universalisation of secondary education, the Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) and also on the Model School Scheme. The broad physical targets of the RMSA include improving the enrolment ratio for classes IX-X to 75% within 5 years from 52.26% as in 2005-06, providing facilities for estimated additional enrolment of 32.20 lakh students by 2011-12 through, strengthening of about 44,000 existing Government Secondary schools, opening of 11,000 new secondary schools, appointment of 1.79 lakh additional teachers and construction of 80,000 additional classrooms. Model Schools are meant to be schools of excellence and are expected to be pace setters for neighbourhood schools. Basically, a model school will have infrastructure and facilities of the same standard as in a Kendriya Vidyalaya and with stipulations on pupil teacher ratio, ICT usage, holistic educational environment, appropriate curriculum and emphasis on output and outcome.

The Members of Parliament present in the meeting raised the several issues including different parameters for funding or establishing institutions in mountainous or other regions requesting a different approach when the components of the Scheme are being formulated, that States should be asked to give a vision for education which could use as a basis for planning by the Central Government. It was also stated that there should be better coordination between the NCERT and the SCERTs. It was also underlined that the teaching should be multilingual so that the students of the country are able to express themselves in a variety of ways. Members also expressed the requirement of vocational education at secondary level in schools. (From class IX). A member also expressed concern regarding inadequate expenditure in the 11th Five Year Plan for education related schemes.

Shri Sibal clarified that the States had requested to give their vision for education. He also stated that a meeting of the NCERT, the SCERTs, and the COBSE is already planned to be held for better coordination between these bodies.

Also present at the Meeting, from the Human Resource Development Ministry were Smt. D.Purandeswari, MOS, HRD, Smt. Anshu Vaish, Secretary (SE&L) and Smt. Vibha Puri Das, Secretary, (HE), besides other senior officials of the Ministry. The Members of the Consultative Committee who attended the meeting are: Shri G.N. Ratanpuri, Dr. (Smt.) Kapila Vatsyayan, Smt. Shobhana Bhartia, Shri Baijayanti Jai Panda, Dr. Chinta Mohan, Shri Ghanshyam Anuragi, Shri Jitendra Singh, Shri Jose K. Mani, Shri Kabindra Purkayastha, Dr. M. Thambi Durai, Dr. Nirmal Khatri, Shri Prem Das Rai, Dr. Ranjan Prasad Yadav and Shri Sucharu Ranjan Haldar.

Source: New Delhi [/pib.nic.in](http://pib.nic.in)/10 August 2010

SC seeks dossier on deemed universities

Apparently dissatisfied with the mode and manner in which the Centre decided to accept Tandon Committee report

recommending de-recognition of 44 deemed universities, the SC on Wednesday sought details of lacunae in each case intending to take up the scrutiny all by itself.

In the face of a stinging legal challenge mounted by the deemed universities facing threat of derecognition and the Centre agreeing for a court scrutiny, a Bench comprising Justices Dalveer Bhandari and Deepak Verma wanted the HRD ministry to provide details of lacunae detected by the committee leading to the controversial recommendation.

Even as the faulted deemed universities questioned the legality of Tandon Committee's recommendations when a statutory body, UGC, had given them a clean chit, the Bench's doubts about the committee's assessment came out in the open.

Taking the view that the list of 44 was a mixed bag, the court asked the Centre to file an affidavit within four weeks indicating the basis on which some universities were shunned with zero marks on the scale by the committee. What weighed with the court was the fact that some of these 44 institutes had got excellent ranking from UGC as late as December 2009 that made the court assume that the parameters set by the Tandon Committee were perhaps too high.

"There are some institutions that deserve to be deemed," the Bench said, quoting the example of Gurukul Kangri institute at Haridwar which despite its cherished history of ayurvedic and yoga teaching, failed to clear the Tandon Committee test.

The institute had cited a report of December 2009 prepared by UGC finding it a fit university to retain deemed status.

Source: New Delhi [/timesofindia/](http://timesofindia/)12 August 2010

Broadband connectivity in schools

Under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme "Information and Communication Technology in Schools" there is a provision for internet connectivity including broadband in Government and Government aided secondary and higher secondary schools subject to availability of telecom infrastructure in the vicinity and based on viable proposals from the State Government.

The Rural Wire-line Broadband Scheme of Department of Telecommunication, there is provision for providing broadband connectivity to individual users and Government Institutions, including schools in rural and remote areas. Under the Scheme, BSNL plans to provide 8,88,832 wire-line broadband connections to individual users and Government Institutions, including schools, and will set up 28,672 kiosks over a period of 5 years i.e. by 2014. As of May 2010, a total of 1,42,906 broadband connections have been provided in rural and remote areas.

Under the Centrally Sponsored Plan Scheme "National Mission on Education through Information and Communication Technology (NMEICT)", there is a proposal to provide broadband connectivity to over 18000

colleges in the country including each of the Departments of 419 Universities/Institutions of higher learning by the end of the 11th Five Year Plan.

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

Source: New Delhi [/pib.nic.in/](http://pib.nic.in/)13 August 2010

Law Ministry mulls commission to regulate legal education

The Law Ministry plans to set up a national commission to regulate various aspects of legal education in India, a job so far entrusted with the Bar Council of India. The draft Higher Legal Education and Research Bill, 2010, prepared by the Ministry provides for creation of a national commission to regulate various aspects of legal education.

The bill provides for the regulation of various aspects of higher legal education and research, grant of recognition to law schools, colleges and institutions imparting legal education and research.

The ministry drafted the bill to counter the HRD Ministry's National Commission for Higher Education and Research Bill, which sought to include legal education under the ambit of a single regulator for all streams of higher education.

According to one of the clauses of the draft bill, the ministry seeks to create a national commission comprising a chairperson and six members to be appointed on the recommendation of a selection panel headed by the Prime Minister.

While there is no mention of the Bar Council of India, other members in the selection panel would include the Attorney General, Chief Justice of India or his nominee and the Law Minister.

"The General Council shall advise the Commission on the measures to be taken for connecting higher legal education and research to the practice of professions," a provision of the bill states.

According to 1961 Advocates Act, promotion of legal education and laying down its standards, in consultation with universities, has been defined as a function of the BCI.

Source: New Delhi [/hindustantimes.com/](http://hindustantimes.com/)13 August 2010

Standard of primary education in rural areas

National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) conduct National Learners' Achievement Survey for classes 3, 5, and 8 periodically. Till now two rounds of achievement surveys have been conducted. In the case of class 5 Mathematics; there has been an improvement in learning levels from 46.51 per cent in the 1st round to 48.46 per cent in the 2nd round of achievement survey. In language, there has been an improvement from 58.57 per cent in the 1st round to 60.31 per cent in the 2nd round, and in Environmental studies the improvement has been from 50.30 per cent in the 1st round to 52.19 per cent in the

2nd round. Under SSA, several steps have been taken to improve the standard of primary education. These include, inter-alia, recruitment of 10:30 lakh additional teachers to improve Pupil-Teacher Ratio, regular In-service Training of Teachers, and distribution of Free Textbooks for children in Primary and Upper Primary classes. Learning Enhancement Programmes for Mathematics and Language, Schools through Block Resources Centres (BRCs) and Cluster Resource Centres (CRCs) etc.

The Central funds allocated for the SSA programme during the 9th Plan, 10th Plan and 11th Plan (up to 2010-11) are Rs.500.00 crore, Rs.27.896.25 crore and Rs.54.371.00 crore respectively. The Performance Audit report on SSA for the period 2001-02 to 2004-05, submitted by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India in August, 2006, indicates that an amount of Rs.53 crore can be classified as expenditure, not covered under the SSA guidelines. The Government of India has directed the States/UTs to recoup the inadmissible expenditure to the State SSA programmes. The States/UTs have also been strictly instructed to avoid recurrence of such instances in future. The Financial and Procurement Manual for SSA lays down detailed procedures on accounting, fund flow arrangements, financial reporting, internal controls, external audit and procurement procedures etc. Concurrent financial reviews are undertaken by a professional body of auditors, and field monitoring is undertaken by Social Science Institutions

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

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

7,000 lecturers may lose jobs

More than 7,000 college and university lecturers in the state could soon find themselves out in the cold. The Bombay High Court, on Thursday, refused to interfere with the University Grants Commission's (UGC) decision to cancel exemptions granted to them to continue in service. Clearing the National Eligibility Test (NET), State Level Eligibility Test (SLET) or completing a PhD is the minimum criteria set by the UGC for teaching positions in undergraduate colleges across the country.

However, in a resolution passed on February 23 this year, the UGC decided to exempt lecturers appointed between September 1991 and January 2001 from these conditions.

But, a week later, the UGC withdrew the exemption following a directive from the Human Resource Development Ministry.

The ministry also curtailed UGC's powers to exempt college teachers who did not meet the eligibility criteria and allow them to continue in service.

After the UGC cancelled all exemptions on June 10, the Maharashtra Federation of University and College Teachers Organisations moved the Bombay High Court

challenging the HRD Ministry's directive and UGC's subsequent action.

Counsel for the organisation, N M Ganguli, pointed to three earlier orders of the high court, which directed the UGC to process exemption applications of lecturers.

The contention, however, failed to impress a division bench of Justice D K Deshmukh and Justice R.G. Ketkar, who refused to interfere with the UGC's decision or entertain the petition.

"Let the academicians do their job," observed Justice Deshmukh adding, "the court cannot decide what the eligibility criteria for certain posts should be."

The matter is likely to be finally decided on Monday, when Ganguli will let the court know of the petitioner's wish to withdraw the plea.

The issue dates back to September 1991, when the UGC introduced NET as an entry point qualification for college and university lecturers.

The state government had, at the time, refused to make it mandatory considering the shortage of NET qualified teachers.

Source: Mumbai hindustantimes.com/14 August 2010

PM announces constitution of education and health councils

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Sunday announced constitution of two separate councils for higher education and health to accelerate reforms in these sectors. Addressing the nation from the ramparts of the Red Fort on the 64th Independence Day, Singh said improvement in the areas of education and health is an important strategy for inclusive growth.

"It is also necessary for higher economic growth in the years to come," he said.

Singh said, "Today almost every child in our country has access to primary education. Now we need to pay more attention to secondary and higher education".

The Prime Minister said there was also a need to improve the quality of education at all levels.

"We will soon bring a bill to Parliament for constitution of two separate councils in higher education and health respectively so that reforms in these two areas can be accelerated," he said.

Human Resource Development Minister Kapil Sibal and Health Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad have both favoured such councils. The National Knowledge Commission has also backed the formation of such bodies.

On the health front, Singh said though nutritious food and good health services are necessary, they are not enough for ensuring good health of the citizens.

There are many diseases which would be difficult to prevent in the cities, towns and villages without cleanliness and good sanitation, he said.

Singh said, "The truth is that our country lags behind in this area. I consider it a primary responsibility of all our citizens to maintain cleanliness and hygiene around them. I would like our children to be taught the importance of cleanliness and hygiene in schools from the very beginning under a campaign for a Clean India".

He appealed to the state governments, Panchayat Raj Institutions, civil society groups and common citizens to make this campaign successful.

Source: New Delhi [/hindustantimes.com/](http://hindustantimes.com/) 15 August 2010

ANALYSIS/OPINION/INNOVATIVE PRACTICE

Foreign universities bill, an un-prescribed pill

Freeing our educational institutions from regimental shackles will be a far wiser option than inviting foreign universities

The proposed Foreign Educational Institutions (Regulation of Entry and Operations) Bill, 2010 seeks to permit foreign players into India's higher education system. There is no dearth of applications for opening private higher education institutions. In addition to the existing 7,000-plus engineering colleges through which 8,00,000 students graduate every year, 2009-10 saw more than 200 applications considered favourably for establishing engineering colleges.

In the U.S., particularly, the financial tsunami has forced the Department of Education to slash funds at all levels — school, community colleges and universities. Budgets are being cut from many state-supported universities as they are facing huge shortfalls. With rising tuition fees affecting local enrolments, foreign universities are forced to look at alternative geographical markets to increase enrolment.

The Ministry of Human Resource Development estimates that permitting foreign universities will reduce the foreign exchange outflow by 75 per cent. This is questionable. According to an ASSOCHAM report, the annual outflow of foreign exchange due to Indian students going abroad is \$ 10 billion.

Despite the availability of quality subsidised engineering and management education in India (on average, an engineering or management student in a reputed institution pays \$120 a month as fees compared to \$1,500-5,000 in an equivalent institution the U.S., Canada, Australia, Singapore and Britain), about five lakh students go abroad every year.

One of the main reasons is the high quality of the post-graduate and doctoral degree programmes offered in institutions abroad, delivered through innovative methodologies and abundant flexibility. In addition, the students crave for foreign exposure which can be a springboard for a global career. Even if foreign universities open up campuses in India, a vast majority of students will

still prefer to leave India, and the impact of this on foreign reserves will continue to be felt.

Faculty crisis

A fallout of permitting foreign universities is the likely flight of teachers from the Indian institutions, compounding the existing shortage of qualified faculty. The Indian universities will not be able retain their teachers as with their drastically lower fee structures, they cannot match the pay packets of the foreign universities.

The persisting faculty crisis in Indian higher education presents a bleak picture. On May 5 this year, the Lok Sabha was informed that 34 per cent of the 11,085 teaching positions across 22 universities in India are lying vacant. The paucity of qualified faculty is felt even more in professional and technical institutions. With the engineering students in India increasing every day, institutions are facing a faculty shortage to the extent of 67 per cent all over the country. Even in premier institutes like the IITs, faculty shortage is an issue of serious concern. Foreign universities can only add to this.

In terms of infrastructure, many Indian universities can boast of a world class facility. But the lack of academic and administrative freedom is constraining many from meeting global standards.

Until the AICTE was conferred statutory powers in 1987, only the universities and the State Governments had powers to set up technical educational institutions. During the late 1970s and 1980s, the governments of Karnataka and Maharashtra permitted private trusts and societies to establish educational institutions. In 1984, the Tamil Nadu government followed suit and started permitting self-financing institutions. Andhra Pradesh was the next, joined by all the States and hence imparting higher education no longer became the exclusive duty of the state. The Supreme Court judgment in Unnikrishnan's case also paved the way for collection of the actual expenditure incurred per student in an unaided institution.

There are several regulatory bodies like the UGC, the AICTE and the MCI, stifling the growth of education under the guise of regulating institutions without giving them functional freedom. Freeing institutions from such regimental shackles would be a far wiser option than inviting foreign universities to our shores.

If the MHRD is dead set on permitting foreign universities, it should allow a calibrated entry. At the moment, it seems that foreign universities will target only the huge undergraduate degree market, as introducing postgraduate courses here could endanger the enrolment of Indians on U.S. campuses. The government should hence permit them on condition that they begin with postgraduate/doctoral education for the first 10 years with their own existing faculty. While this will be a litmus test of the true intentions of the foreign universities, the time period will help level the playing field for Indian institutions to take on foreign competition.

Financial control

Also, there needs to be a tightening of the Act to ensure that foreign universities plough their surplus back into educating Indians. On the surface of it, Section 5 (3) of the Act appears to do this. It states that no part of the surplus in revenue generated in India by a foreign education provider, after meeting all expenditure in regard to its operations in India, shall be invested for any purpose other than for the growth and development of the educational institutions established by it in India. Even a layman with no accounting knowledge will know that accounting firms have in stock numerous mantras to divert funds, not necessarily by way of profit. The Act must hence prevent the diversion of funds in any form and not just the diversion of surplus.

With a plethora of issues confronting Indian education at all levels, the foreign university Bill is an un-prescribed pill.

Source: [/hindu.com/](http://hindu.com/)1 August 2010

Committed to spread literacy: PM

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh Tuesday said India has a "long way to go" in spreading literacy, adding that paucity of funds will not be allowed to hamper the spread of education in the country.

"We still have a very long way to go (in spreading education)," Manmohan Singh said, referring to "significant gains" India has made in the field.

"According to UNESCO's Global Monitoring Report 2006, out of 771 million illiterates in the world, 268 million are estimated to be residing in our country, which accounts for nearly one-third of the world's non-literates," he said.

The prime minister was speaking at a lecture of his "school friend" and Nobel laureate Amartya Sen organised by Pratichi Trust, Asian Development Research Institute and the National Literacy Mission.

"It is our government's commitment that paucity of funds will not be allowed to limit the spread of literacy and education in our country. It is on the foundation of this fiscal commitment and political resolve that we went to parliament and added a new fundamental right to our constitution - the Right to Education," the prime minister said.

Even though India's GDP has recorded a very high growth rate in the recent past, the inferior literacy status of the country has contributed to the lowering of its position in the UNDP's Human Development Index.

Manmohan Singh said the government has taken a series of important steps in the past six years "to make the light of literacy and education shine for every child, every citizen - irrespective of gender, caste or religion".

He lamented that even at the end of the first decade of the knowledge century, "a quarter to a third of our people remain illiterate".

"It is even more unfortunate that a strong gender bias against women persists in the spread of literacy," he said, adding that to make India "fully literate and to eliminate the gender bias in literacy must be our immediate priority goals".

Sen's talk focused on "The Centrality of Literacy". He said the schooling could be deeply influential in the identity of a person and the lack of school education could make a person susceptible to violence.

The Nobel laureate said that basic education "plays a role in tackling health problems in general and epidemics in particular".

"Women's education helps in reducing infant mortality rate and illiteracy can muzzle political voice and ability to understand one's legal rights," he said.

Sen said in rapidly changing societies like India and China, discussion on smoking could be introduced in school curriculum and added that "India can be a pioneer in this regard".

Source: [/education.in.msn.com/](http://education.in.msn.com/)4 August 2010

Building human capital – II

The government needs to raise the bar on higher education. This entails increasing opportunities for enrolment as well as improving the quality of higher education. Key to achieving this will be to encourage private investment in higher education and also bring greater accountability among institutions for their performance. On some of these, the government has taken definitive steps. It is planning to start 16 new central universities, eight new Indian Institutes of Technology and seven new Indian Institutes of Management. To catalyse rapid growth, the government is now encouraging private participation. While this is a good start, it still remains a hugely unexploited opportunity. The government is seeking to bring more transparency and accountability in higher educational institutions through a bold new regulatory regime, the National Accreditation Regulatory Authority. This is now setting the much needed direction towards a step change in building human capital.

A Confederation of Indian Industry report, on the mapping of manpower skills in Maharashtra to the state's projected requirement by 2012, came up with some very pertinent recommendations on what educational institutions can do to enhance overall employability in India. These included: a farm-to-work programme so that those who are employed in seasonal, agricultural work can move to other jobs in between; a school-to-work programme that can employ those who wish to join the workforce once they reach employable age; experiential learning programmes so that students can be better prepared to deliver when they start working and modular courses so that students can pick from an array of skills and train for any subset thereof to improve their employability.

Through such initiatives, we can ensure that the millions of able but unemployed youth can find meaningful and sustainable employment. For example, training of school dropouts through modular courses for specific jobs will enable 17 million young school dropouts to be gainfully employed. The current educational institutions must embrace the culture of skills training so that it benefits the wider sections of society and addresses the big issue of employability.

India needs ITIs as much as it needs IITs. We need to accelerate access to technical training to address the key issue of skills development at the grassroots level. E-learning is another big opportunity. With over 600 million live mobile connections and Internet access rapidly connecting the country, there must be a creative use of technology to transform the access and cost of mass education while, at the same...

Source: [/Financial Express.com/](http://Financial Express.com/)4 August 2010

International funding to revive Nalanda University

International funding will be sought for the proposed revival of the ancient Nalanda University, a global centre for learning, and Singapore Buddhist organisations have already offered donations for the construction of a world-class library.

"We will go for international fund raising," Amartya Sen, chairman of Nalanda Mentors Group and Nobel economics prize winner, told reporters here Tuesday.

"The Singapore Buddhist community is making an important gesture to finance library," Sen added. They have reportedly offered around \$5-10 million (Singapore dollars) to finance the institution. Sen said they were open to funding from both public and private organisations as well as religious institutions.

Pegged as a symbol of global cooperation in education, the Nalanda University, proposed to be set up in Bihar near the site where an ancient university flourished centuries ago, will have schools on Buddhist studies, philosophy and comparative literature, historical studies and ecology and environmental studies.

The Nalanda Mentors Group, constituted in 2007 and chaired by Sen, has been giving a concrete structure to the plan to revive the educational institution, which had attracted students from across the world in ancient times.

The mentors group held extensive two-day meetings here that was also attended by Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar.

George Yeo, visiting Singapore foreign minister and member of mentor group, said that he hoped "that by East Asia summit, the bill will be passed and work will begin".

He was referring to the proposed legislation to be tabled during the current parliament session which will govern the operations of the university.

Amartya Sen also introduced the new vice-chancellor designate for the university, Gopa Sabharwal, a sociology professor in Lady Shri Ram college.

"This is an exciting task and a huge responsibility. The primary task is to translate vision of Nalanda Mentors Group," said Sabharwal.

Asked if Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama was associated with the project, Sen said: "No religious activist is involved in the process. This does not mean that they are out of the frame."

Source: [/education.in.msn.com/](http://education.in.msn.com/)4 August 2010

Diluted BEd norms give quality go-by

The stress on improving the quality of teachers under the Right to Education Act seems to be misplaced since the National Council of Teacher Education (NCTE) has diluted the norms to pursue a B Ed degree under distance education for untrained teachers.

The change has been two-fold. First, the minimum marks in graduation have been brought down from 55% to 50% for distance education candidates. However, the 2009 regulation had clearly stipulated 55% marks in graduation. Second, those working as teachers -- but don't have a B Ed degree -- don't even have to fulfill the criterion of having a 50% cut-off in their graduation.

On July 26, NCTE issued a new regulation that changed the eligibility for the B Ed course for untrained teachers.

"Graduation or post-graduation Degree with 50% marks: Provided that the requirement of 50% marks shall not apply to persons appointed as teachers prior to the commencement of the National Council for Teacher Education (Regulation Norms and Procedure) Second Amendment Regulations 2010," stated the new rule.

However, NCTE sources expressed reservation about the leeway being given to untrained teachers just to allow them take up the course.

This implies teachers, who might have scored, say, only 36% in their graduation/post-graduation or any marks in qualification equivalent less than 50%, will be allowed to enroll for B Ed.

Also, it remains to be seen how NCTE will be able to strike a fine balance while formulating the qualification norms during appointment of teachers.

Significantly, there will be an unequal competition between aspirants who have scored less than 50% marks in their graduation and those who have scored more.

"The decision was taken so that lakhs of untrained teachers can acquire B Ed degree. It is limited only to teachers who are holding a job," reasoned an HRD ministry official.

As for the eligibility for pursuing B Ed through classroom mode, the norms remain the same -- the candidate should have scored at least 50% marks in his Bachelor's or Masters or any other qualification equivalent.

Source: New Delhi [/Times of India/](#)5 August 2010

Tougher campus rules for private universities

The Centre is set to regulate the operations of private universities that are often found opening off campuses illegally and duping students by offering unapproved courses.

The University Grants Commission (UGC), which regulates higher education, will consider tougher norms for the opening and operation of private universities at its meeting on Thursday, official sources have told The Telegraph.

A committee set up by the UGC has prepared new regulations saying such institutions need at least five years of standing to be eligible to open a campus outside the state where it is established.

After a review of the 2003 regulations, the committee — comprising Prof. K. Ramamurthy Naidu, R.K. Chauhan and Amitesh Kumar — has suggested that private universities will be allowed to open off campuses only after their financial strength and experience are ascertained. The UGC will send committees to the institutions to check out both.

The private university will have to demonstrate that it has the funds to establish labs and other facilities at its off campus in accordance with parameters set by regulatory agencies like the UGC, the All-India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) or the Medical Council of India.

The private university will also have to get the consent of the state government where the parent institution is located as well as that of the state where the off campus will come up. To start campuses abroad, it will have to take the permission of the parent state government, the Centre and the foreign country. The parent state government and the private university are also mandated to inform the UGC about the establishment of the new campus after the legislature enacts a law to that effect.

At present, private universities are not bound to inform the UGC about their establishment and functioning. The UGC gets to know of them when they approach it for grants or permission to open off campuses. According to UGC records, there are 63 private universities in the country.

The new regulations say private universities can only offer courses approved by the UGC at off campuses. If they want to start a new course, they will have to get it approved by the UGC.

Once the UGC takes a decision on the new regulations, they will be sent to the human resource development ministry for approval. They will then be notified, the sources said.

Private universities are set up either by an act in the legislature or Parliament. Their operation is limited to the territorial jurisdiction of the state that has passed the law for their establishment. They are allowed to open off

campuses with the approval of the UGC, AICTE and the Distance Education Council.

However, the UGC has found that several private universities have opened off campuses without the permission of the regulatory bodies. Many have also been offering unapproved courses. The UGC has issued public notices many times cautioning students against taking admission for such courses.

Source: New Delhi [/telegraphindia.com/](#)9 August 2010

Industries should become partners in vocational training: Minister

Higher and Technical Education Minister Rajesh Tope has called on industries to become partners in imparting vocational training and come forward to provide practical training for better employability. He was speaking at the launch of the 'Learn and Earn' scheme in the city to give technical training to class X and XII passed students.

He said active participation of the industry would help double the number of graduates government polytechnic and diploma courses. "The state government is planning to start an independent technical university. We are inviting private partners to be part of the new initiative. The main aim is to increase employability," said Tope.

The new scheme launched is approved by the Maharashtra Government Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University (YCMOU) and Yashaswi Institute of Technology (YIT) have entered into a joint venture to implement the scheme. It is being promoted and supported by Tata Autocomp Systems Ltd. Vishwesh Kulkarni president, YIT, said, the students will undergo practical training for four years in various industries. "Industry will pay Rs 5000, Rs 5500, Rs 6000 and 6500- respectively for four years. Students will work as apprentice for four years under the Apprentice Act 1961. The industry will also provide uniforms, shoes, safety equipment and insurance cover to the students. The fees for the diploma is Rs 8,900 per semester and there will be eight semesters," he said.

Kulkarni said, the diploma scheme would be rolled out to the entire state with engineering colleges and polytechnics offering them the theory classes. "The eight hour practical will be provided by the industries. The scheme has diploma in mechanical engineering, electrical engineering, electronics and instrumentation. We are expecting to enroll around 20,000 students in this academic year from across the state," he said.

RS Thakur, executive director and CEO, Tata Autocomp Systems Limited, said, the earn and learn scheme serves to empower the economically less privileged youth of the society through education. "The scheme will provide the auto sector, which is faced with talent shortage, and will also help in flow of talent to other industries. The scheme will provide the inspiration and blueprint to many more such private-public-partnership schemes," he said.

Source: Mumbai [/indianexpress.com/](#)10 August 2010

A harsh spotlight on education

Contrary to frequent assertions that the development of physical infrastructure is the key to ensuring India's future, the country's destiny actually lies in the aggressive nurturing of its human capital potential. (For more on this point, see my previous post.) Two events last week threw important light on the debilitating state of India's educational system and, by extension, its ambitions to be a full-fledged global power. The first was a public lecture by Amartya Sen, an eminent Indian economist, which focused on the chronic problem of illiteracy. The second was an address by India's vice president, Mohammad Hamid Ansari, which took aim at the country's failings in the area of technology education, supposedly one of the country's strengths.

Dr. Sen, who won the 1998 Nobel Prize in Economics and currently teaches at Harvard University, is known for his focus on the relationship between educational attainment and economic growth. In his lecture, he argued that deficiencies in the educational sector - particularly the widespread lack of basic literacy - are the root cause for many of India's development challenges, and deplored the wide disparity between the country's high-flying growth rates and its dismal literacy rates.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Kapil Sibal, the minister for human resource development, also spoke at the event. Dr. Singh underscored his government's commitment to raising literacy rates. But he conceded that "we still have a very long way to go" and lamented that "a quarter to a third of our people remain illiterate." He also admitted that "no modern industrial nation has less than 80 percent literacy" - China's rate is over 90 percent - and drew attention to the disturbing gap between literacy among Indian men (75 percent) and women (54 percent). Closing this gender bias must be an "immediate priority goal," he argued.

For his part, Minister Sibal expressed confidence that India will achieve full literacy by the end of this decade. This will be a very tall order to fulfill, even for the energetic Sibal since a few days later he also acknowledged a national shortage of 1.2 million teachers. Both in terms of the availability of resources and their effectiveness, the public education system scores poorly relative to the other BRIC countries and to other emerging market countries. According to a recent report the Associated Chamber of Commerce & Industry of India, the country ranks last in primary education among the world's seven largest emerging economies. And the 2009-2010 Global Competitiveness Index places India at 100th, out of 133 nations evaluated, in terms of the quality of primary education (China is ranked 42nd).

To be sure, India in recent years has made important gains. For example, the World Bank reports that elementary school enrollment increased by almost 60 million between 2003-2009. And the Singh government can take credit for the recently-passed Right to Education

(RTE) act that provides a constitutional guarantee of free schooling to children aged 6-14 years.

Yet questions remain whether, given the nation's fiscal problems, New Delhi can come up with adequate funding for the RTE act. And even when children are in school, it's unclear whether they are actually learning. Last year's Indian Education Report found that only 36 percent of Year Five students could actually do division sums correctly, while around 40 percent of all rural children in the same grade were at least 3 full grades behind in terms of education.

Moreover, as a new UNESCO report points out, India leads the world in the number of adult illiterates, with 270 million; China comes in second with 71 million.

Vice President Ansari's remarks focused renewed attention on the deep problems plaguing higher education in the areas of engineering and technology. His address was all the more resonant given that it was delivered at the convocation of the prestigious Indian Institute of Technology at Delhi, one of 15 elite engineering and technology schools that are widely regarded as the crown jewels of Indian university system. But as Ansari made clear, all is not well even among the vaunted IITs.

He emphasized that the country has few institutions with strong international standing. Among the IITs, only those in Bombay and Delhi are listed in the 2009 Times Higher Education ranking of the world's top 50 engineering and information technology institutions. But no Indian school, including any of the IITs, ranks among the top 100 universities in the widely-consulted Shanghai Jiao Tong university index or in the Times Higher Education (THE) ranking of the world's top 200 universities. The first Indian school appearing in the Jiao Tong listing, in the 303-401 tier, is the Indian Institute of Science in Bangalore; the first IIT mentioned, in the 402-501 tier, is the one at Kharagpur. The first Indian institution listed in the THE scores is IIT Bombay, ranked at 163th; IIT Delhi is ranked 181st.

Ansari noted that on the basis of research output - whether measured by publications, literature citations, or patent applications and awards - India's engineering schools fare poorly even in comparison to other developing countries. He also bemoaned that less than one percent of IIT graduates choose to pursue post-graduate studies within the IIT system, while tens of thousands of others have expressed their lack of confidence in the state of Indian technical education by flocking to masters and doctoral programs in the United States.

Ansari's is the latest in a series of pointed critiques that Indian leaders have issued in recent years that illuminate the chasm between the country's high-tech image and the defective state of its technology education. In 2006, Prime Minister Singh's scientific advisor warned that research output from Indian universities is "hitting an all-time low. They are unable to perform and compete. Moreover, even our top institutions are not performing well in terms of

research papers and the number of research students they train.”

A year later, a senior government official in New Delhi lamented that the country manages to produce less than 50 PhDs in computer science each year and conceded that India would never become a great power on the basis of such paltry numbers. (This point is even more poignant when one considers that Israel graduates approximately the same number of computer science PhDs as India despite the gargantuan population disparity.)

Other red flags are also visible:

- Incredibly, the Infosys Science Foundation in 2009 was unable to find a worthy recipient for its inaugural prize honoring an Indian researcher in the field of engineering and computer science.
- The Journal of the ACM, the world’s leading journal in the computer science field, has for a number of years been unable to publish Indian submissions on quality grounds.
- Concerns about the caliber of India’s legions of engineering graduates have mired New Delhi’s bid for full membership in the Washington Accord, which governs international recognition of foreign engineering degrees.
- Indians took pride in Venkatraman Ramakrishnan, a structural biologist who shared in the 2009 Nobel Prize in chemistry. But since he is an U.S. citizen who works in the United Kingdom, his award also highlighted the fact that no Indian working in India has won a Nobel Prize in the scientific arena since C.V. Raman’s 1930 award in physics. Israelis, on the other hand, have managed to win three Nobel Prizes in chemistry since 2004 - again despite the vast differential in population size.

Indians are eager to take their place in the front rank of great powers and some have even taken to calling their country “the knowledge hub of the 21st century.” But as Sen and Ansari (and even Singh in his own way) remind us, serious questions remain about whether India has the internal prerequisites to make such a claim.

Source: india.foreignpolicyblogs.com/ 10 August 2010

Employment oriented education

Keeping in mind that the education system should cater to the needs of the manpower requirement for the economic development of the country, Government has accorded high importance to vocational education and training. While elaborating on the essence and role of Education, the National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986 (as modified in 1992) has recognized that Education develops manpower for different levels of the economy. The NPE also envisages the introduction of systematic, well-planned and rigorously implemented programmes of vocational education. These elements are meant to develop a healthy

attitude amongst students towards work and life, to enhance individual employability, to reduce the mis-match between the demand and supply of skilled manpower, and to provide an alternative for those intending to pursue higher education without particular interest or purpose. The policy envisages that efforts will be made to provide children at the higher secondary level with generic vocational courses which cut across several occupational fields and which are not occupational specific.

The Government has already started Technical Quality Improvement Programme to improve quality education and enhance existing capability of the technical institutions to become dynamic demand-driven, quality conscious, efficient at national and international levels. The proposed reforms include faculty development, examination reform, curriculum revision, semester system seminar tutorials, and autonomy with the accountability.

Nation-wide scheme of “Sub-Mission of Polytechnics” has also been launched, wherein assistance is being given to the State Governments for starting 1000 new Polytechnics, revamping the Community Polytechnic Scheme and increasing their number to 1000, providing assistance for construction of 500 women hostels and for the upgradation of existing 500 Polytechnics. The UGC also has a scheme of Career Orientation to Education/Career Oriented Programme/Career Oriented Course, with an objective to ensure that graduates who pass out after completing these courses, have knowledge, skills and aptitude for gainful employment.

Under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme of “Vocationalisation of Secondary Education” which was started in 1988, vocational courses are offered at the higher secondary stage to enhance the employability of the students. The National Curriculum Framework, 2005 has recommended work-centred education as an integral part of the school curriculum.

The Government has also introduced a scheme called Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS). There are 221 JSS in the country and they are expected to act as district level support agencies especially in regard to organization of vocational training and skill development programmes for the neo-literates and other large groups of the continuing education programme. The Jan Shikshan Sansthans offer a large number (371) of vocational training programmes from candle making to computer courses. In the year 2006-07, 17.53 lakh beneficiaries have been covered under various vocational training programmes and other activities.

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

Source: New Delhi pib.nic.in/ 11 August 2010

Drive to develop love for books in aspiring teachers

School children across the state are expected to benefit from a trickle-down effect of their teachers picking up the

reading habit. Students of teacher training institutes across the state will soon be directed to public libraries in their vicinity with authorities planning a scheme to link the two.

The Directorate of Teacher Education, Research and Training (DTERT) will work with the Directorate of Public Libraries to execute the initiative which is expected to be launched on August 16. There are a total of 30 District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs), 43 government-aided teacher training institutes (TTIs), nine government-run TTIs and over 600 such self-financing institutions.

According to M Manimegalai, principal, District Institute of Education and Training (DIET), Triplicane, the initiative would be of great help to the aspiring teachers as it would give them access to more reading material.

"Normally, our students get to read only source books for their subjects. They don't really get to expand their knowledge. Now, these library books will prove to be an extension of what they learn at the institute. For instance, in a subject like geography, they may learn how to teach children about the formation of rainfall. However, for them to go beyond this and keep in touch with the latest trends of climate change and global warming, a visit to the library would prove ideal," she said.

Pointing out that it would help increase teachers' knowledge as well as transmit a love for books to school children, the DIET principal added that it may result in promoting a reading habit among children. "We tend to watch more television these days to acquire knowledge instead of reading books. However, we don't realise we can only get nuggets of information from the television whereas we can get volumes of it from books. If teachers develop a love for books, it will pass on to their students naturally," she said.

Source: Chennai [/timesofindia/](http://timesofindia/) 13 August 2010

IT for the private school

Dell's got some big plans for Indian private schools and it hopes to transform the usage of IT in this segment.

Of the 1.3 million schools in India only 14% have ICT (at least one PC per school). However, about 44% of the Internet population in India consists of students. It is this fact that heartens Sridhar S., Director Marketing, India Relationship Business, Dell India Pvt. Ltd. He believes that the education system is passing through a revolution and that it is poised for bigger growth for three reasons—the Right to Education Bill; investments in higher education as part of the current Five Year Plan and the Foreign University Bill.

"IT is going to form the bedrock of all of this. Today's younger generation is more aware of what's possible. For that the content needs to happen—it has to come from universities and the other providers (NIIT, Educomp, Everonn, APTECH etc.) and from converting the content

of, say, 9th and 10th standard physics into this form," said Sridhar.

IT usage in Public & Private Schools

The usage of IT at Public schools is quite different from that of Private schools. The government tends to purchase for a thousand schools at a time with a ratio of 1:10 (server:PC). Dell recently executed a large order as part of government education for one of the Northern states and the number of units being shipped is running into thousands. "Three more similar deals are on the table and we are going to execute them shortly," said Sridhar. He added that, in the case of Public schools, the government, which is the decision maker, looks at purchases differently than is the case with private institutions. "They give it as a contract to one person—everything from tables and chairs to computers to the person who's going to educate—it's the BOOT model. They provide it as a single contract with a per month payment over so many years," he said.

Today, IT in a Public school could mean just one PC or two-three PCs. Some of these schools have a computer lab with a server and a handful of client PCs. The ramp up, Dell feels, would be from this state to one where you have several labs in a school and eventually move to classroom education using PCs/laptops. "It's a huge evolutionary path. Government schools today have a unique opportunity to leapfrog straight to the classroom," said Sridhar.

Dell's strategy: time for a change?

As per IDC, in Q1 2010, in terms of overall PC shipments (including notebooks) HP led the market with 16.5%, followed by Dell (13.6%) and Acer (13.0%). Looking at desktop PCs, Dell didn't make the top three but it was runner-up in laptops behind HP.

Obviously, Dell's got to do something dramatic if it is to compete with HP which is entrenched at the top of the PC mart. One of Dell's initiatives to boost its sales of laptops and servers and other equipment in India is to go after the education sector—particularly the private school market in a unique manner.

To pull back a bit, Dell is divided into four divisions of which Public cater to government, defense, education and healthcare. This division was formed about 18 months ago and it contributes about 25% of Dell's global revenue. It is this division that has formulated the concept of a Connected Classroom which was formally launched in India during May 2010.

To do this, Dell envisaged the challenges that would be faced in terms of, say, being able to charge a laptop in a rural scenario. It also released the Latitude 2100, a ruggedized netbook. "There is a mobile cart that you can use to charge a bunch of Latitude 2100 machines. At the end of the day you put the netbooks in the cart and the next day they are ready for use," commented Sridhar, citing another innovation that's part of the Connected Classroom.

Dell's clear that content without IT infrastructure is irrelevant and vice versa. It began looking at the things that were

needed in a private education scenario—a teacher's PC or server, a set of clients for the students, some interactivity whether it is in the projector or the whiteboard etc. The goal was to create a collaborative environment enabled by IT where the teacher could educate with the student's active participation.

Dell is clear that it will take years before every student in the country has his or her own laptop but it also believes that it is time to introduce mobile computing and digitized content into the Indian education system at the school level. "Today the content is all in English, but even that can give us phenomenal coverage not just in the top cities. You can go to city no. 32 and still sell English education," said Sridhar. He admitted that as you go to government, municipal and village schools, you are talking about vernacular content and that remains a distant dream.

He admitted that Connected Classroom was the smallest of the four markets in education (with the others being Public Schools, HPC for Research Institutes and Management Schools). However, he felt that it had tremendous potential.

Dell said that international schools, private schools, trust-owned schools etc. were considering the Connected Classroom, especially after a Schoolathon [See box: Related initiatives in education from Dell] in which 1,100 schools participated. "Many schools have shown interest and we are in talks with them," said Sridhar adding, "We are trying to put the whole ecosystem together. I can feel happy selling the next 10,000 units with one government deal and another 7,000 units with another deal but we believe that there is some responsibility that we have to take back."

Connected Classroom is targeted at the Private Schools. Dell felt that the same solution, provided with the right kind of curriculum, could well apply in undergraduate classrooms as well. "Conceptually it is about digitizing content and moving away from the traditional chalk and talk method to digitizing education and the crux of it lies in bringing about greater collaboration with regard to how the teacher interacts with the student in a more interactive manner. Then there's the issue of how content is loaded onto the machines. We obviously need the right kind of content providers and have relationships with the likes of NIIT, Everonn, Educomp etc.," said Sridhar.

Related initiatives in education from Dell

Dell had a Digital Schoolathon Contest that ran in Q1 2010 and about a thousand schools were invited to participate and envision the Classroom of the Future. Two schools won and were given the Connected Classroom for free and the implementations are in progress. Five teachers were awarded the Latitude 2100.

Another related initiative from Dell is that of Youth Connect that aims to reach out to under-privileged people. "Last year the grant was about Rs. 15 crores which we gave to 10 NGOs. The next tranche of money is coming in the next

two months," said Sridhar. 1% of Dell's pre-tax earnings are being invested for philanthropy on a global basis.

How Connected Classroom works

Dell offers this solution by itself or with partners. The power vendors could be different; interactive whiteboards are a third-party product; services, depending upon the location of the school, could be delivered by Dell itself or a partner could be used for last-mile delivery; the site assessment, structuring etc. would be project managed by Dell and, lastly, the content would come from providers such as NIIT, Everonn, Manipal K-12 etc.

In the classroom, there is the teacher's PC which has an application that allows the teacher to see a thumbnail of all the students' machines. The teacher's PC could be a server or a desktop depending upon the content. The offering is customizable in terms of who does what depending on the school's needs and its comfort factor. Incidentally, the successor to the ruggedized Latitude 2100 is out. The Latitude 2110 is also a netbook with the primary difference between it and its predecessor being that the 2110 is powered by the current crop of Intel Atom N470 processors.

Pilots: progress report

The use of netbooks and servers in the classroom is a considerable shift from the earlier use of PCs in education wherein it was limited to CDs for reading or homework (tutorials). "The use of interactive projectors and whiteboards has caught the attention of the Private Schools," said Sridhar adding, "In one school, where we bring the content providers with us, we provide the infrastructure and are working with them to see the feasibility of this project. At the moment it is being piloted in one classroom." Dell hopes that the school management would, if satisfied with the pilot, go ahead and deploy Connected Classroom for a category of classes, say, the entire high school or elementary school, for instance.

Other markets in education

Business schools are a significant segment. Every year they take in hundreds or thousands of students and buy anything from 2,000 to 5,000 laptops. That's Connected Campus as per Dell. These institutes provide wireless laptops and add it to the monthly fee and the student is able to access the library, the content, research papers etc. Dell sells Vostro and Latitude laptops to this segment. "There are probably about 2,000 institutes that are capable of buying these products and every year you have repeat purchases from at least a few hundreds and the range varies from 100 laptops to 3,000 upwards depending on the scale of the institute," commented Sridhar.

If you look at higher education, a lot of research institutes including the IITs and IISc buy IT equipment for High Performance Computing (HPC). These institutions provide their output to research establishments worldwide. Their requirement is different from that of a management institute. Dell said that it had made significant inroads into this market citing a win at NIT Calicut. It has also won many

deals related to the CERN project which is being implemented at many institutions around the world. "We are replicating pieces of that infrastructure depending upon the size of the project that each of these institutions are handling and there are over a dozen institutions in India where we are working closely with them," said Sridhar.

While these are bigger markets than the nascent Private School market for Connected Classroom, Dell faces established competitors in the other segments.

Then there's the fact that some Indian universities are planning to convert a few of their regional education centers into something akin to providing education in the cloud. "They are going to digitize education and put it centrally in their data centers at their headquarters. They will convert some of their regional centers into where the student can collaboratively link with the teacher," said Sridhar. Other players such as Adobe are also playing in this distance education market.

Will it work?

Dell's chances are good largely because at this point none of its competitors has a similar offering and the fact is that Indian parents who send their kids to Private Schools already shell out for so many value-adds that one more, particularly one that introduces IT to the mix, would not seem an undue burden. Moreover, education in the developed countries does rely to a large extent on the use of laptops and servers. However, this doesn't mean that it will be a cakewalk for Dell. It will have to get the first 15-20 schools on board and only then will others start taking the concept seriously. Once that happens, it will have to move fast before others like HP, or even Apple that does very well in education in the US, crash the party. Having said that, this is an interesting innovation from Dell and the company could well benefit from it to the tune of a point or two of market share in the next year or two.

Source: New Delhi [/expresscomputeronline.com/](http://expresscomputeronline.com/) 13 August 2010

PPP in education must focus on Long-Term social returns

"Redefining the quality of education, improving delivery standards, and looking for social returns, rather than quarterly economic returns, are important for achieving success in Public Private Partnership (PPP) in education," said Mr. Anurag Behar, CEO, Azim Premji Foundation.

Addressing the Plenary Session on PPPs in Education and Healthcare at Suminfra 2010, a two-day summit on sustainable PPPs in infrastructure, being organised by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) here today, Mr. Behar said that the primary purpose of private sector in PPP projects in education should aim at long term social returns in terms of producing truly smart people to enhance the competitiveness of the Indian industry.

He said that the private players, who enter into education with the sole objective of making profits, largely end up

either exiting the venture or cutting corners by compromising on quality of service delivery. Mr. Behar pointed out that considering the economics of education sector; it is not possible for running it for profit. "None of the higher education institutions and universities in the West – including MIT, Harvard and Yale – are able to sustain their operations without the help of very large endowments," he said.

Mr. Sanjay Rai, Sector Head for Urban Infrastructure, Healthcare and Education, Axis Bank, in his address, said, "Over regulation, governance issues related to educational trusts, land acquisition and scalability are some of the key factors that impacts Public Private Partnership (PPP) projects in education in India.

While weak corporate governance of trusts and security structure hinder the participation of debt funding, the no-profit nature of the industry structure and lack of a model for scalability affect the participation of equity players from funding PPPs in education."

Mr. Rai said that the education sector is strategically critical for the country that attracts strong public interest. The demand supply gap in this capital intensive sector with long gestation period is very high. India has one million schools and over 18,000 higher education institutions. The country spends close to 4% of its GDP in education said Mr. Rai.

In his address Mr Bhanu Mehrotra, Operations Officer, PPP Transactions Advisory, International Finance Corporation, World Bank Group, said that there is a need for new, scalable models for PPP in healthcare as the existing PPP models evolved by NGOs and CSR initiatives of corporates do not prove to be sustainable and profitable. PPPs can be tried out in non-clinical services, management contracts, infrastructure development, clinical services and full fledged healthcare management.

Mr. Mehrotra said that factors such as inadequate infrastructure, inadequate utility of existing infrastructure, inadequate supply of specialised, technical staff and rising costs are daunting the healthcare delivery system in India.

In his address Mr. Vikesh Mehta, Head, Advisory Practice, Grand Throton, said that managed equipment services - where public hospitals transfer the entire risk of managing all medical equipment to private player, is turning out to be a booming area in PPP in healthcare worldwide. He said that the private player will be the sole interface for negotiating with suppliers, replacement and ensure value for money.

"In the long run, government should play the role of a regulator ensuring efficiency, effectiveness and equity in the provision of healthcare services,"

Mr. Mehta said and pointed out that in 2008, the total value of economic transactions in healthcare sector in India pertaining to in-bound, out-bound investments and mergers & acquisitions have been to the tune of US\$ 6 billion, while in the first five months of 2010, it has become US\$ 5 billion.

Source: Bangalore [/indiaeducationdiary.in/](http://indiaeducationdiary.in/) 14 August 2010

India's education sector – back to school

India's US\$40b education market is experiencing a surge in investment. Capital, both local and international, and innovative legal structures are changing the face of this once-staid sector

The liberalization of India's industrial policy in 1991 was the catalyst for a wave of investment in IT and infrastructure projects. Rapid economic growth followed, sparking a surge in demand for skilled and educated workers. This, combined with the failure of the public system to provide high quality education and the growing willingness of the burgeoning middle class to spend money on schooling, has transformed India's education sector into an attractive & fast-emerging opportunity for foreign investment.

Despite being fraught with regulatory restrictions, private investors are flocking to play a part in the "education revolution". A recent report by CLSA (Asia-Pacific Markets) estimated that the private education market is worth around US\$40 billion. The K-12 segment alone, which includes students from kindergarten to the age of 17, is thought to be worth more than US\$20 billion. The market for private colleges (engineering, medical, business, etc.) is valued at US\$7 billion while tutoring accounts for a further US\$5 billion.

Other areas such as test preparation, pre-schooling and vocational training are worth US\$1-2 billion each. Textbooks and stationery, educational CD-ROMs, multimedia content, child skill enhancement, e-learning, teacher training and finishing schools for the IT and the BPO sectors are some of the other significant sectors for foreign investment in education.

Opportunity beckons

The Indian government allocated about US\$8.6 billion to education for the current financial year. But considering the significant divide between the minority of students who graduate with a good education and the vast majority who struggle to receive basic elementary schooling, or are deprived of it altogether, private participation is seen as the only way of narrowing the gap. Indeed, it is estimated that the scope for private participation is almost five times the amount spent on education by the government.

CLSA estimates that the total size of India's private education market could reach US\$70 billion by 2012, with an 11% increase in the volume and penetration of education and training being offered.

The K-12 segment is the most attractive for private investors. Delhi Public School operates approximately 107 schools, DAV has around 667, Amity University runs several more and Educomp Solutions plans to open 150 K-12 institutions over the next four years. Coaching and tutoring K-12 students outside school is also big business with around 40% of urban children in grades 9-12 using external tuition facilities.

Opening the doors

Private initiatives in the education sector started in the mid-90s with public-private partnerships set up to provide information and communications technology (ICT) in schools. Under this scheme, various state governments outsourced the supply, installation and maintenance of IT hardware and software, as well as teacher training and IT education, in government or government-aided schools. The central government has been funding this initiative, which follows the build-own-operate-transfer (BOOT) model, under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan and ICT Schools programmes. Private companies such as Educomp Solutions, Everonn Systems, and NIIT were among the first to enter the ICT market, which is expected to be worth around US\$1 billion by 2012.

Recently, the central government invited private participation in over 1,000 of its industrial training institutes and offered academic and financial autonomy to private players. Companies such as Tata, Larsen & Toubro, Educomp and Wipro have shown keen interest in participating in this initiative.

Regulatory roadblocks

Education in India is regulated at both central and state government levels. As a result, regulations often differ from state to state. K-12 education is governed by the respective State School Education Act and the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) Rules and Regulations concerning affiliation and/or the rules of any other affiliating body. Under current regulations, only not-for-profit trusts and societies registered under Societies Registration Act, 1860, and companies registered under section 25 of the Companies Act, 1956, qualify to be affiliated with the CBSE and to operate private schools.

While the K-12 segment accounts for the lion's share of India's educational market, weaving through the complex regulatory roadmap to qualify for affiliation poses serious difficulties for investors. The CBSE requires privately-funded schools to be non-proprietary entities without any vested control held by an individual or members of a family. In addition, a school seeking affiliation is expected to have a managing committee controlled by a trust, which should approve budgets, tuition fees and annual charges. Any income accrued cannot be transferred to the trust or school management committee and voluntary donations for gaining school admission are not permitted. Schools and higher education institutions set up by the trust are entitled to exemptions from income tax, subject to compliance with section 11 of the Income Tax Act, 1961. In order to qualify for tax exemptions, the trust needs to ensure that its predominant activity is to serve the charitable purpose of promoting education as opposed to the pursuit of profit.

Alternative paths

Alternative routes do exist for investors seeking to avoid the web of regulatory barriers that constrain their involvement. Sectors such as pre-schools, private coaching and tutoring, teacher training, the development and provision of

multimedia content, educational software development, skill enhancement, IT training and e-learning are prime sectors in which investors can allocate their funds. These areas are attractive because while they relate closely to the profitable K-12 segment, they are largely unregulated. As such, they make attractive propositions for private investors interested in taking advantage of the burgeoning demand for quality education. Companies such as Educomp Solutions, Career Launcher, NIIT, Aptech, and Magic Software, are market leaders in these fields. Educomp recently acquired a large number of educational institutes and service providers across India. It has also formed joint ventures with leading higher education groups, including Raffles Education Singapore, for the establishment of higher education institutions and universities in India and China. Furthermore, it has entered into a multi-million dollar collaboration with Ansal Properties and Infrastructure to set up educational institutions and schools across the country and closed an US\$8.5 million deal to acquire Eurokids International, a private provider of pre-school educational services in India. Gaja Capital India, an education-centric fund, has completed the funding of three education services companies in India. NIIT and Aptech, meanwhile, are engaged in the IT training business.

Core Projects and Technology is also focusing heavily on India and is likely to bid to takeover, upgrade and run public schools for specified periods on a public-private partnership basis.

Higher hurdles

While state governments are largely responsible for providing K-12 education in India, the central government is accountable for major policy decisions relating to higher education. It provides grants to the University Grants Commission (UGC) and establishes central universities in the country. The UGC coordinates, determines and maintains standards and the release of grants. Upon the UGC's recommendation, the central government declares the status of an educational institution, which once authorized, is entitled to award degrees.

State governments are responsible for the establishment of state universities and colleges and has the power to approve the establishment of private universities through State Acts. All private universities are expected to conform to the UGC guidelines to ensure that certain minimum standards are maintained.

Amity University in Uttar Pradesh is one of the private universities to open its doors. It was approved by the Uttar Pradesh state legislature on 12 January 2005 under section 2(f) of the University Grants Commission Act.

Not-for-profit and anti-commercialization concepts dominate higher education fee structures. To prevent commercialization and profit-making, institutions are prohibited from claiming returns on investments. This, however, does not pose a hurdle for universities interested in mobilizing resources to replace and upgrade their

assets and services. A fixation of fees is required in accordance with the guidelines prescribed by the UGC and other concerned statutory bodies. For this purpose, the UGC may request the relevant information from the private university concerned, as prescribed in the UGC (Returns of Information by Universities) Rules, 1979.

In line with the policy on Fee Fixation in Private Unaided Educational Institutions Imparting Higher and Technical Education, two types of fees are required: tuition fees and development fees. Tuition fees are intended to recover the actual cost of imparting education without becoming a source of profit for the owner of the institution. While earning returns on investment would not be permissible, development fees may provide an element of partial capital cost recovery to the management, serving as a resource for upkeep and replacement.

Legal precedents

In order to be awarded university status by the UGC, institutions must comply with the objectives set forth in the Model Constitution of the Memorandum of Association/Rules, and ensure that no portion of the income accrued is transferred as profit to previous or existing members of the institution. Payments to individuals or service providers in return for any service rendered to the institute are, however, not regulated.

In this context recent court judgments on private universities are relevant. The Supreme Court, in Unnikrishnan JP v State of Andhra Pradesh, introduced a scheme regulating the admission and levy of fees in private unaided educational institutions, particularly those offering professional education. The ruling was later notified in the fee policy.

Subsequently, in the case of Prof Yashpal and Anr v State of Chattisgarh and Ors in 2005, the Supreme Court assailed the Chattisgarh government's legislation and amendments which had been abused by many private universities. It was contended that the state government, simply by issuing notifications in the Gazette, had been establishing universities in an indiscriminate and mechanical manner without taking into account the availability of any infrastructure, teaching facilities or financial resources. Further, it was found that the legislation (Chhattisgarh Niji Kshetra Vishwavidyalaya (Sthapana Aur Viniyaman) Adhiniyam, 2002) had been enacted in a manner which had completely abolished any kind of UGC control over private universities.

The Supreme Court concluded that parliament was responsible for ensuring the maintenance and uniformity of higher education institutions in order to uphold the UGC's authority. Following the judgment, only those private universities that satisfied the UGC's norms were able to continue operating in Chattisgarh.

Professional institutions

Professional and technical education in India is regulated by professional councils such as the All India Council for

Technical Education (AICTE). Established under the AICTE Act, 1987, AICTE gives recognition to courses, promotes professional institutions, provides grants to undergraduate programmes, and ensures the coordinated and integrated development of technical education and the maintenance of standards. The AICTE has recently exerted pressure on unrecognized private technical and management institutes to seek its approval or face closure.

A single bench decision of the Delhi High Court in Chartered Financial Analysis Institute and Anr v AICTE illustrates the far-reaching implications this kind of pressure can have on all institutions operating independently of the AICTE. The court found that the Chartered Financial Analyst Institute, a US-based organization, was engaged in imparting technical education and that its charter, though not described as a degree or diploma, was nevertheless descriptive of the candidate attaining an academic standard, entitling him to pursue further courses, and achieve better prospects of employment in the investment banking profession. The AICTE argued that the Chartered Financial Analyst Institute fell within the ambit of its regulation and was therefore obliged to submit to the jurisdiction of the regulatory body. The Delhi High Court upheld the AICTE's view that the Chartered Financial Analyst Institute did qualify as an institution imparting technical education.

This judgment may have emboldened the AICTE to proceed against a number of other establishments that are on its list of unapproved institutions. It holds particular significance since despite not granting degrees and diplomas, the Chartered Financial Analyst Institute was still deemed by the court to be covered under the description of a "technical institute".

Enthusiasm grows for foreign participation

While regulators such as the AICTE continue to exercise influence in the Indian education system, the sector is expected to witness a surge in foreign investment and perhaps a reduction in the number of regulatory roadblocks as a result of the central government's enthusiasm for overseas investors. Foreign direct investment in higher education could help reduce government expenditure and there is a general consensus that education as a whole should be opened for domestic and foreign private participation.

The entry of foreign educational institutions into India will be covered by the new Foreign Education Providers (Regulation for Entry and Operation) Bill. The bill seeks to regulate the entry and operation of foreign education providers, as well as limit the commercialization of higher education. Foreign education providers would be given the status of "deemed universities" allowing them to grant admissions and award degrees, diplomas or certificates.

Operationally, the bill proposes to bring foreign education providers under the administrative umbrella of the UGC, which would eventually regulate the admissions process and fee structures. Since these foreign institutions will

have to be incorporated under central or state laws, they will also be subject to the government's policies of reservations. The bill is pending approval from the Indian Parliament but it is unclear if it will be taken by the present government for a vote prior to the general elections in 2009.

Innovative structures unlock profitability

The regulatory restraints on running profitable businesses in the K-12 and higher education sectors have driven Indian lawyers to devise innovative structures that enable private investors to earn returns on their investments. These typically involve the establishment of separate companies to provide a range of services (operations, technology, catering, security, transport, etc.) to the educational institution. The service companies enter into long term contracts with the trust operating the institution. Payments made by the trust to the service companies must be comparative and proportionate to the services rendered by such companies. Furthermore, in order to qualify for tax exemptions, the expenses paid by the trust to the service companies must not exceed what may reasonably be paid for such services under arm's length relationships. Despite the regulatory constraints, the Indian education sector is on a path of exponential growth. A growing number of private companies are undertaking creatively structured projects in the education business and the level of investor confidence is demonstrated by the recent spate of M&A activity that has taken place.

With more domestic players emerging, the education sector is likely to witness consolidation, but at the same time, increasing foreign participation will drive competition and raise standards. Liberalization will continue to intensify as the government struggles to remedy its poor public education system and provide quality institutions to educate India's masses.

Source: worldwidemarketonline.com/ 14 August 2010

Class Struggle

The success of programmes like the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and Mid Day Meal Scheme (MDMS) in getting most children enrolled at the primary level has created the illusion that the government is now finally getting down to business and boldly financing education. Spending on education quadrupled between 1990-91 and 2000-01. Since 2004-05, the combined expenditure on education by the Centre and states has increased at a blistering pace — from about Rs 96,694 crore to Rs 1,86,499 crore, an almost 100 per cent increase. However, during this period, total expenditure by the government on all sectors has also gone up considerably, backed by the high growth rate of the Indian economy. But how much of the total government expenditure — and GDP is the share that goes to education? It has remained virtually stagnant since 1991-92.

If you break down the expenditure to see how much is being spent on different stages or types of education, the

declines become starker. Between 2001-02 and 2007-08, the combined expenditure of the Centre and states as a proportion of total expenditure and GDP actually declined for elementary, secondary and higher education.

A similar decline or stagnation has been witnessed in technical and professional education in recent years. The share of government expenditure on technical education has stagnated at about 0.4 per cent of GDP for almost two decades. In a country where only about 2 per cent of the population has received technical education of any kind, this is disastrous.

What is the effect of the state's retreat from education? Since there is widespread thirst for education and an ever-growing demand for diverse educational options and services, the vacuum is filled by private educational institutions. But the burgeoning private sector in education comes with its own problems, which are now beginning to haunt Indian students and their families.

Private educational institutions tend to congregate in areas where they get the best returns. Thus, remote tribal areas or villages will not see private schools while urban centers will have an excess of them. This tends to deprive already disadvantaged sections of the population from access to education.

Since private educational institutions essentially function for profit, their fee structures tend to be higher than that of government-run institutions. According to National Sample Survey (NSS) reports, household expenditure on fees for education has gone up by 188 per cent in rural areas and 154% in urban areas between 1993-94 and 2004-05.

The quality of education is one of the most serious casualties of declining public expenditure, because the government's regulatory system too takes a hit from the lack of resources to monitor the gigantic Indian educational system. Recent incidents of deemed universities, teachers' training colleges, medical colleges and regular colleges functioning below stipulated standards are but the tip of the iceberg. Delays in checking and implementing standards, and widespread corruption in regulatory bodies lead to thousands of students getting duped. This can be prevented if there is efficient regulation.

Declining quality standards in mainstream education have also led to the growth of the shadow education system — the world of private tuition and coaching classes. Parents struggle to ensure that their children receive better education and seeing falling standards in institutions, especially schools, they are forced to pay for private coaching. Again, this puts a burden on families' expenditure. Expenses on private coaching have recorded an increase of 73 per cent in rural areas and 82 per cent in urban areas since 1993.

In higher education, regulation of quality has become a serious issue. There are about 17,625 colleges in the country. Out of these, about 14,000 come under the purview of the UGC and the remaining under technical education bodies like the AICTE and MCI. Out of the UGC

colleges, only 5,589 are recognised under section 2(f) of the UGC Act, meaning they fulfill the minimum condition of being run by a registered body with an affiliation to some recognised university. Over 60 per cent of colleges do not even fulfill the bare minimum conditions.

The National Assessment & Accreditation Council (NAAC) is responsible for evaluating the performance and standards of colleges and universities. However, it has been unable to inspect over 60 per cent of the institutions. Granting accreditation or evaluation rankings are a different matter altogether.

Another important area within education that has suffered is teachers' training. This is a crucial link in the system as it is teachers who are going to nurture future generations. However, the government has virtually ceded ground to unscrupulous operators by allowing them to set up private teachers' training shops across the country, partly under pressure to produce sufficient number of teachers to fulfill its Right to Education obligations. The National Council for Teachers' Education (NCTE) has become a mere clearinghouse for applications.

In short, the government is still far from the recommended 6 per cent of GDP on education. Ironically, it seems to be maintaining the low level in the hope that the private sector will somehow make up for it. But that does not seem to be happening. For the country, it clearly spells trouble.

Source: [/timesofindia/](http://timesofindia/) 14 August 2010

Foreign exchange system in India – an education revolution in India or a myth

The government has finally given its approval to the Foreign Educational Institutions Regulation of Entry and Operations, (Maintenance of Quality and Prevention of Commercialization) Bill 2010 ("Bill"). The bill seeks to regulate entry, operation and restriction of foreign universities in India. However shortly after the Union Cabinet cleared the long-pending draft bill that allows foreign education providers to set up campuses in India and offer degrees independently, most of the Indian opposition parties objected to the bill, slamming it as "commercially driven" and one that would breed inequity. As long as the opposition concerns over issues such as equivalence/parity of degrees, fee structures and equity in terms of access to all students remains, passage of the bill in the Parliament looks tough.

Though, the present FDI policy allows 100% foreign investment in the education sector including higher education, foreign universities are currently not allowed to directly offer degree courses in India. It is estimated that nearly 150 foreign institutes offer courses with Indian varsities under a twinning arrangement, i.e. a part of the course in India and remaining abroad but most of them do not have all required accreditation from the regulatory bodies. The existing arrangements are regulated by the All India Council for Technical Education Regulations for Entry

and Operations of Foreign Universities in India Imparting Technical Education, 2005 ("Foreign Universities Regulations"), which is presently applicable only to technical and management institutes.

Some of the reported provisions forming part of the present bill approved by the Union Cabinet include:

- Different levels of registration process for getting registered with the University Grants Commission ("UGC") or any like regulatory body. Subject to necessary approvals by the UGC, a foreign university could be registered as a 'deemed university' under the relevant provisions of University Grants Commission Act, 1956.
- A corpus fund of INR 50 Crore (US\$ 10 Million Approx.) is required to be deposited by intending foreign university;
- Such foreign universities would be established as "not for profit" companies under Section 25 of the Companies Act and thus cannot take the profit back. Similar provisions are applicable to Indian private universities and deemed universities as profit making activities in education sector is frowned upon by the regulators;
- Foreign universities can however provide consultancy services, faculty development and other like activities and the profit generated from those projects can be repatriated back. Similar structures are being adopted by Indian private universities;
- A time bound process for granting approval to foreign educational institutions to set up campuses;
- Scrutiny of proposals of aspiring institutions on the basis of their previous experience, faculty strength, reputation etc;
- Quota laws providing reservation for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes, may not be applicable to foreign universities setting up campuses in India.

It is indicated that various foreign institutes are already keen to set up campuses in India and these institutes are viewing the recent development with great interest. Thus, legislation of the bill would open a huge market for international educational institutions and collaborations with Indian universities.

The bill once finalized and enacted, is expected to bring huge foreign investment in Indian education sector and support the Indian Government in its commitment to increase public private participation in education sector and raise the college going ratio to 30 per cent by 2020 as compared to the present 12 per cent of all school-leavers entering college. It is also being claimed that this will put India as a "preferred destination for attaining education" on the global knowledge map as it will not only bring down the number of Indian students going out for higher education (estimated to be 1.6 lakh Indian students every year with an outflow of about 7.5 billion of foreign exchange per

annum) but would also attract foreign students from south eastern countries.

Besides this, it is also expected to create new business opportunities for the Indian educational players and new and better salaried job opportunities for the teachers, administrative and technical staff.

While the bill is likely to benefit Indian students by increasing choices presently available to them and help in overall development of the education system in India especially the higher education system, there are still several questions left unanswered such as the lack of regulatory clarity and level of governmental inference, lack of independent regulator (non-government body), compliance with mandatory campus infrastructure and development requirements, flexibility in fee fixation, taxation, closure of universities, etc.

In the absence of the actual Bill being publicly available (it will be available once it is being presented in the Parliament) the above views are based on the earlier version of the Bill publicly available and recent public discussions on the bill.

Source: forex-hedging.org/ 15 August 2010

Some good news, some bad

Independence Day stirs nationalistic emotions even in the cynical heart of your humble columnist so I want to begin this Independence Day piece with good news. It comes from the Human Resource Development Ministry. Incidentally, it should go back to being the Education Ministry because there can be no 'human resource development' without education. Ever since Rajiv Gandhi changed the nomenclature, this most important of all ministries became a place of dead wood and rotten political games. If Arjun Singh spent his tenure promoting dodgy Leftist ideas, his successor, Murli Manohar Joshi, spent it rewriting history to prove that Hindus in ancient times did not eat beef. That Kapil Sibal has understood that his real job is to ensure that every Indian child has access to a decent education should be good news enough but there is more.

Not long ago I went to meet our HRD Minister for a chat about his efforts to improve Indian education and I came back feeling quite cheerful about our future. If Kapil Sibal can do half of what he plans to do then we could have a fully literate India by 2020 and this would dramatically change the fortunes of our ancient land. The Minister has understood the importance of real education, versus minimum literacy, and he has understood that we need millions more schools, at least 700 more universities and 35,000 more colleges. He admits that government cannot pay for all this and that private investment must be allowed. These are not small things if you keep in mind that Arjun Singh did not even understand what compulsory primary education meant. I asked him a question about it in a press

conference long ago and he said, 'But, we have compulsory primary education in India already.'

We do not. And, it is possibly the biggest mistake we made in those first decades after Independence, but if the Minister of HRD does not lose his missionary zeal, we could make up for lost time through implementing the Right to Education law. 'Nobody can deny you (a child) admission,' the Minister told me 'and if you (the school) do not have the right number of teachers, you will be shut down. Government is obliged to provide in the next three years the physical infrastructure. It's a fundamental right and the bill has been passed.'

That is the good news. Now the bad news. A child who is hungry is hard to teach and 45 per cent of Indian children are malnourished which means child malnutrition in India twice as high as sub-Saharan Africa. This is shameful. Nearly seventy years after Independence, 1.5 million children die in India of causes directly related to malnutrition even as millions of tonnes of grain rot in open fields. Last week, the Supreme Court was so appalled by this situation that it advised the Government to distribute the grain free to the poor. Why is this not already being done? Why is it not possible to have free kitchens run by village women in every village in India so that no child goes to bed hungry at night? Having studied closely the reasons why children die of hunger in India, I can tell you that it is only because of bad policies. Huge welfare programmes like the ICDS (Integrated Child Development Scheme) have proved to be a total failure.

This programme was started on Gandhiji's birth anniversary, October 2, 1975, in an act of tokenism typical of Mrs Gandhi when she was briefly Dictator of India. According to government propaganda, 'it is the most unique programme for childhood development, pre-school education and breaking the vicious cycle of malnutrition, morbidity, reduced learning capacity and mortality' in the world. If there was a grain of truth in this claim half of India's children would not be malnourished.

As an optimist and a believer in Dr Manmohan Singh's fundamental decency and economic common sense, I have continued to hope that he would realise that schemes of the ICDS kind are a total waste of taxpayers money. I have continued to hope that he would have discovered in his sixth year as Prime Minister that if he can replace tokenism with some concrete, workable schemes to end poverty and malnutrition his name will be written in Indian history in letters of gold. But, to conclude on a cheerful note, he has given us Kapil Sibal in the HRD Ministry so all he needs to do is put all child welfare programmes under this ministry. And, perhaps by next Independence Day we could have something to really celebrate: every Indian child in school and every Indian child with access to at least one hot meal a day. Now, that would be a real tribute to Mahatma Gandhi instead of the tokenism of naming useless schemes after him.

Source: indianexpress/ 15 Aug 2010

Playgrounds or education?

Nobody will deny that the objectives of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act are creditworthy. But in its efforts to improve the quality of education for children between 6 and 14, it has failed to take into account ground realities — at least when it comes to the norms it stipulates for the infrastructure requirements that schools must cater to in order to be recognised.

The Right to Education Act makes it mandatory for private schools — aided and unaided — to have an all-weather building, separate toilets for boys and girls, a playground, barrier-free access for disabled children, and one classroom per teacher, in addition to an office-cum-store for the head teacher.

In metropolitan cities, land is dear; and schools, particularly government schools, are bursting at their seams with many times the number of children than they can accommodate. For instance, at one government school in Delhi's Khajuri Khas the number of students in both its shifts is more than twice its capacity of 1,200. Last year, at this very school, five girls were killed in a stampede, and 34 others injured.

Go inside any unauthorised slum colony, and you will see one-room schools in tenements. Under the RTE Act, all of them will have to shut — unless, within three years, they meet the building and other requirements. It appears that the question of space in metropolitan cities like Mumbai and Delhi has been completely overlooked. The RTE Act does not specify any land-size requirements, but it does require a playground, and barrier-free access; both need additional space.

Delhi education department officials have said that implementation of the RTE will face hurdles as there is a "scarcity of land for construction of new school buildings". The government plans to build at least two new schools every month. But in two of its districts — Northeast and East, the most populous — there is no land available, and land acquisition from the Delhi Development Authority or gram sabhas is hardly easy. In order to set up a school up to Class 8, the society or the trust needs at least 400 square yards of land of which roughly one-third can be the build-up area and the rest is expected to be open space for children.

The government only has a rough idea of the number of children in its schools; and for out-of-school children, that it seeks to bring into the school system, there are no estimates. Delhi also has a large number of migrant children and government schools can't absorb them all.

In fact, even the government schools don't meet the standards prescribed in the RTE Act. For many years the Zeenat Mahal Sarvodaya Kanya Vidyalaya in Delhi's Northeast district was called the "tent wala school", with its students sitting in the open. While it was given a facelift under Project Roopantar, along with 197 other government

schools that the state government identified, many others still lack basic infrastructure.

Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit has said she will lobby the HRD ministry for the relaxation of building norms for city schools, keeping in view the scarcity of land in urban settings and its surging population.

The Municipal Corporation of Delhi, in an affidavit filed at the Delhi high court last year, said there are about 2,000 unrecognised schools in the national capital. If these are forced to close down, many children will be pushed out of the system. Even assuming just 200 children per school, we will have 400,000 children with no school to go to, who will have to be absorbed by government schools — most of which do not comply with the RTE's infrastructure standards either, and in any case do not have space for more kids.

So we must first ensure education for all, by emphasising the quality of educational output, rather than on these externals.

If that means relaxing the norms for building in certain urban settings in order to ensure all children attend school, it must be done.

Yet output is unfortunately not the criterion to either recognise or de-recognise schools. Instead it is inputs — in this case, scarce land — which do not guarantee a quality education. Yes, eventually all children deserve space to play.

But, today, instead of insisting on playgrounds and other building requirements, stress must be laid on learning outcomes, rather than on the availability of hundreds of yards of land — which only benefits corrupt officials, who can fudge the paper records to show they meet the standards.

In order for the spirit of the RTE Act to be genuinely implemented, building norms must be relaxed, so no child is left behind.

Source: Indianexpress 13 Aug 2010

RESOURCE

20 sectors to drive economy and create bulk of employment: FICCI-IMaCS report

India faced a challenge of mammoth proportions of producing a skilled workforce of 500 million to meet the requirements of a projected CAGR of 8% of GDP by 2022, says a FICCI-ICRA Management Consulting Services Ltd (IMaCS) Report on 'The Skill Development Landscape in India and Implementation of Quality Skills Training'.

The FICCI- IMaCS Report identifies the following 20 sectors that will drive the growth of the economy as well as play a significant role in generating employment:

- Auto and Auto Components
- Building and Construction Materials
- Building and Construction

- Real Estate Services
- Electronics and IT Hardware
- Education and Skill Development Services
- Food Processing
- Gems and Jewellery
- Healthcare
- Textiles
- Leather and Leather Goods
- Organised Retail
- Tourism and Hospitality
- Transportation and Logistics
- Media and Entertainment
- BFSI
- Chemicals and Pharmaceuticals
- Furniture and Furnishings
- IT
- ITES

With about 12 million persons expected to join the workforce every year, and an existing skill development capacity of about 3.4 million, the report emphasizes that it is imperative to enhance the skilling and technical education capacity to about 15 million (considering that even sections of the existing workforce would have to be trained). It is expected that this 15 million would be the required skill development capacity in vocational training in itself as a large portion of the employment (as well as workforce input) would occur in the lower portions of the skill pyramid.

As skill development in a large scale takes off, implementing agencies (government, institutes – both government and private, vocational training providers, and other such implementers) would be faced with challenges that come up at every segment of the skill development value chain. In other words, these are challenges that each skill development centre or groups of such centres are likely to face.

The various challenges would be pertaining to the following dimensions:

- How does a centre attract or mobilise students?
- Is there an ability to pay among trainees?
- What are the courses that need to be offered for each centre/institute, or regionally?
- Is there a demand for such courses/trades?
- Will an in-house system work or a franchisee system or a combination of both?
- How does one standardise content and delivery across a large number of centres?
- How is the training delivered?
- What is the infrastructure required and is it available?
- How can qualified trainers be found?
- Is there a system for third party assessment and certification?

- How will the project owner raise funding?
- What will the form of funding – debt, equity, grant?
- Is the model sustainable and viable?
- How would the institute guarantee placement linkages?
- How does the institute or the training provider connect with industry?

Considering the magnitude of the challenge in terms of skilling about 15 million persons every year and ensuring that the workforce of 500 million is adequately skilled by 2022, it is required that the way forward comprises of adequate initiatives to achieve these humungous targets in the right 'scale' and 'speed'.

Some of the possible solutions to address the issues outlined are as follows: Targeting skill development at all levels of the 'skill pyramid': It is required to not only skill and educate the workforce at the higher skill levels (which is key to ensuring industry competitiveness through research and IP, etc.), but also to adequately skill the workforce at the lower levels (i.e., where much of the workforce is concentrated). Accordingly it is required that skill development initiatives be targeted at all levels of the 'skill pyramid'.

Implementing Vocational Education in schools: Vocational Education in schools should be enhanced. This will present a channel for students to acquire skills, both life skills and industry-specific skills during schooling. The vocational education system should be enhanced from the current 3.2 lakh available under the National Institute of Open Schooling.

Creating a large talent pool through Modular Employable Skills: The MES framework provides a means for multiple-entry and multiple-exit skill development. It brings with it a flexibility to offer short-term, demand-led courses with partnerships. Increased adoption and will help achieve the required scale in skill development.

Ensuring Quality in Delivery: Quality will have to be driven (as well as be determined) by the following dimensions at the level of each/individual institute/centre: Strong Governance and Administration; Adequate and appropriate faculty; Current curriculum; relevant infrastructure; a defined process for evaluation of student learning from in-gate to out-gate, employment, and employability and Rewarding partnerships.

Employing technology to achieve scale: Information and Communication Technology (ICT)- led interventions will help achieve scalability, standardisation, and maximisation of impact. ICT can have a role to play in the following areas: Need Assessment and Sourcing (through media, internet, community based mobilisation, employer views); Curriculum Design and Development (standardised curriculum which can be easily replicated and offered at multiple locations to aid scale up); Education and Training Delivery (through recorded/interactive teaching input); Assessment and Certification

(through e-testing, computer based tests, supporting current theory and practical tests) and Placement linkages (employer and student views on demand, centralised placement systems).

Formulation of institutional mechanisms for content formation, delivery, and assessment: As the demand for training grows, there will also be a cascading impact on the demand for content, standardised processes for training delivery, uniform assessment practices. These will drive the demand for trainers and assessors which will be a critical bottleneck as other pieces of the ecosystem fall in place. Furthermore, there would be a need for standards and quality processes (quality systems formulation, quality assessment, quality certification/training process certification) as the demand for training grows rapidly. These would require institutional mechanisms, specifying of quality standards and practises.

Expediting the formulation of Sector Skill Councils: Given the need to ensure standards, industry involvement and industry led initiatives, it is required to expedite the formulation of Sector Skills Councils. The National Skill Development Policy has proposed the following roles for the Sector Skills Councils: Identification of skill development needs; Development of a sector skill development plan and maintain skill inventory; Determining skills/competency standards and qualifications; Participation in affiliation, accreditation, examination and certification; Plan and execute Training of Trainers; and Promotion of academies of excellence.

Setting up of a National Human Resource Market Information System (a National Skill Exchange): The requirement for an ICT-enabled market information system will help both employers and employees provide details on specific demand, as well as where the access to the skilled workforce exists. This should not only be limited to the vocationally skilled workforce but also be made available to the higher skill levels as well. **Source:** Orissadiary/

Enhance vocational education for skill development: Ficci

The government should take steps like enhancing vocational education and setting up a national skill exchange so that India has a trained workforce of 500 million more by 2022 for sustained GDP growth, according to a Ficci report.

India faces a challenge of mammoth proportions of producing skilled workforce of 500 million to meet the requirements of a projected CAGR of 8 per cent of GDP by 2022, the report said.

"...Ensuring that the workforce of 500 million is adequately skilled by 2022, it is required that the way forward comprises adequate initiatives to achieve these humungous targets in the right scale and speed," it said.

With about 12 million expected to join the workforce every year, and an existing skill development capacity of 3.4 million, the report emphasises that it is imperative to

enhance the skills and technical education capacity to about 15 million.

"It is expected that this 15 million would be the required skill development capacity in vocational training in itself as a large portion of the employment (as well as workforce input) would occur in the lower portions of the skill pyramid," the report said.

It said this massive task could be tackled by steps like targeting skill development at all levels, creating a large talent pool, ensuring quality in delivery and expediting the formulation of sector skill councils, it added.

The report said a national skill exchange would help both employers and employees in providing details on specific demand and where access skilled workforce exists.

India currently has an estimated workforce, including those in unorganised, of 457 million.

The report also said auto and component, real estate, healthcare, textiles and IT are among the 20 sectors that would drive the growth of the economy as well as play a significant role in generating employment.

Source: Mydigitalfc.com / 15 Aug 2010

Contribute

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

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

Please email your contributions to aserf@apeejay.edu

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

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