



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**Challenges in introducing value education at higher education in India**

Value Education is the much debated and discussed subject in the plethora of education in India. Of course it is true that the main purpose of any education will go with Value orientation. More concentration on Value education has been given at the primary and secondary level of school education than in higher education in India. Values could be effectively imparted to the young minds rather than to the matured ones. It may be the important reason for this prime importance given at the school level. There are so many modules designed with the help of agencies like NCERT and others for effectively imparting the value education to the school students. In this context, many innovative educational practices are being identified by the experts. Good number of experiments and studies are being conducted in the recent days on the effectiveness of teaching value education at school level. Some schools have very innovative and radical course designs to impart the values.

Effective teaching practices in imparting value education ranges from story telling, exhibitions, skits, one act play and group discussions to various other formats. New methods have been evolved by educationists to create an effective learning sphere. The usage of electronic gadgets also gains importance in the teaching-learning practices of value education. But at the higher education level, due to various reasons, the importance given to value education is not as much as it is given at the school level. The curriculum and the teaching methods also could be subjected to scrutiny. It is true that colleges are meant for a kind of specialization in some field of education. But in the Indian social context, the youth require direction and counseling at this stage. They have been exposed to various challenges at this stage which demands the intervention of educationists for his/her betterment. His/her character building also strengthens at this juncture. Students' perception on various life factors and events are getting shaped at this stage. On the whole they evolve their own philosophy of life. Their sensitivity and knowledge are getting direction at this stage. Hence, an effective value orientation becomes inevitable to the students of colleges. Keeping this requirement in mind, States like Tamilnadu introduced a compulsory paper/course on value education to undergraduate students of all colleges in the State under the choice based credit system. Though this kind of effort is made with the good intention of imparting values to the youth, many limitations in bringing out the expected outcome could be identified.

The problem mainly begins with the definition of values. Defining the term 'value' poses a challenge to all scholars. The term value is loaded with varieties of meaning. Each meaning reflects its own philosophical position. Generally the term value is spontaneously associated with religious

values. It is believed by many Indians that values are nothing but the religious and spiritual guiding principles of life. Hence, it is supposed that the path is already been laid for the life journey. But in the context of modernity and modernism there rises a fundamental question of whether value education is required at all in a modern state. There are those who argue that modern life is based on science and technology, and both are value neutral. They view that the values are bugbear held out by people living in the past, glued to outdated religious principles that have no relevance to the 21st century. At this point, there is also another group of modernist who propagate the necessity of value education at learning centres in order to safe guard the democratic state and its values. The values they wish to cultivate are modern secular values such as honesty, respect to other, equality, collectivity, democracy, respecting the human rights, sharing equal space in the public sphere and so on. These values are considered as the products of enlightenment period. Hence, four positions could be arrived at on the basis of the above understanding:

- There are religious values which are very much essential for every one and must be included in the curriculum.
- The religious values should not find place in the educational system. They may operate at the private sphere.
- There are non-religious secular values and they must find space in the education.
- There is no need for teaching value education in the academics because they cannot be cultivated through formal learning and such value cultivation will make the individual biased.

In consequence to these positions, following questions arouse.

- Whether value education should find place in the educational system?
- If it is required, then what sort of values should be given preference in the curriculum?
- What is the importance to be given to the religious values which are primarily developed on the basis of scriptures?
- Can modern values alone are sufficient enough or is there any possibility of blending the values of modernity with religious values?
- If religious values are to be given importance in the curriculum, which religion will find prime place? If there are contradictory propagation on a single virtue by two religions, then how are they to be handled?

Similarly religions differ on the practices also. Right from eating patterns, dress mode, marriage systems, war tactics, killing, punishments to various other aspects, religions differ on their outlook. In this situation, what sort of perceptions need to be taught?

Besides these questions, another billion dollar question would be raised on the methodology of effectively imparting those values. Then again as it is mentioned earlier, the school education can very well include this education easily because the system itself is advantageous for it to accommodate. But at the college level, the system finds it very difficult to work out. So this study could analyse the theoretical problems relating to the identification of values to be included in the curriculum at the one side and the problem of effective designing of the curriculum and imparting those values on the other side.

II

The necessity for imparting values to the students of all levels has been felt by everyone. The world today is facing unprecedented socio-political and economic challenges. Problems of life are becoming increasingly intense and complex. Traditional values are decentered. 'An environment of strife pervades all countries and broken homes have become common. An insatiable hunger for money and power, leads most of people to tension and absence of peace of mind and all kinds of physical and mental ailments have become common place'

1. In the present day context of frequent and often violent social upheavals, we have to look at the problem of restlessness of the youth, their frustration born out of futility of their search for meaning of life and the purpose for which they are living, often leading to evil and wickedness.

This calls for a new approach to, and a new vision of education. It is obviously felt that the present educational system promotes rat race and keep the student community in a sense of insecurity. Educational institutions have become the pressure cookers building pressures in the minds of youth. Also a loft sided educational pattern which insists on instrumental and technical rationality for the successful life in terms of gaining money and power has invaded the educational system of India. The person who is deemed to be unfit for this survival race becomes disqualified and ineligible to live in this market economy based life.

The spate of industrialization and economic growth in developed nations has brought about a perceptible change in this scenario. And developing countries including India are feeling the ripple effects of this development. Values earlier considered essential by all societies have been eroded and have given way to unethical practices around the globe. Where honesty and integrity were loved and appreciated, greed, corruption and red tapism have come in, bringing in their wake, unethical responses which have pervaded all walks of life and are thwarting efforts of a few enlightened individuals to promote value based society.

2 Hence, implementation of well structured education is the only solution available with all states. With growing divisive forces, narrow parochialism, separatist tendencies on the one hand and considerable fall in moral, social, ethical and national values both in personal and public life on the other, the need for promoting effective programmes

of value orientation in education has assumed great urgency. Development of human values through education is now routinely seen as a task of national importance. Value education though supposes to be the part and parcel of the regular education, due to the market influences, it could not be so. Hence, it has become an inevitable need to include an exclusive curriculum for value education at all levels.

Now the next question would be about the nature of value education. What sort of values should be given preference in the curriculum is the prime problem in the introduction of value education. This problem surfaces because we can find varieties of values prescribed on the basis of various scriptures and theories. Sometimes they are contradictory to each other. This issue has been thoroughly discussed earlier. But the solution to the problem of the nature of value education is primarily dependent on the social conditions that prevail in the state. There need not be an imported value educational pattern to be prescribed in India. The burning social issues would demand the required value education.

Though India is considered to be the land of divinity and wisdom, the modern value system throws challenges to the ancient value pattern. Right from the Gurkula pattern to the varna ashrama values, all values are under scrutiny by modern rationality. Hence, the relevance of the golden values prescribed by the then society is questionable in the present situation. On the other hand, the so called modern values which have been listed earlier also subjected to criticism by philosophers like post modernists. They question the very nature of the rationality of the enlightenment period. Because critics of modernity strongly declare that the modern rationality is the reason for the deterioration of human concern in the world and they paved the way for inhuman killing and escalation of values. The reason of the modernism is considered as the root of power politics which leads to inhuman behaviour of the power system, according to them. Hence the modern values like democracy, civil rights, environmental ethics, professional ethics, discipline and all such values are found useless in bringing harmony in the society. The values like discipline, tolerance, peace bears the negative connotation in this context. Hence, what sort of modern values are to be included in the curriculum is a challenge thrown towards the educationists. At one side the fanatic and fundamentalist features of religious values and on the other side the modern values based on the market economy and other factors are to be excluded and a well balanced curriculum with genuine worthy values suitable to the society has to be identified and included in the educational system. In this context, it becomes obvious that there cannot be any universal pattern of values to be prescribed in the system. When a suitable blend of religious and modern values is to be done, the designing of such course demands an unbiased, scrupulous, intelligent approach on the part of the academicians who designs such course. Thus the spiritual values of sensitizing the youth for happy world and rational values for a just world are very much required.

Religious values can be taken but not with the label of any particular religion, democratic values are to be included but not with its dogmatic inhuman approach. Thus there need a perfect blend of both. This is the real challenge thrown to the Indian academicians.

After the identification of these values, they need to be inculcated not to be informed to the students. Mostly listing the values is done very easily, but imparting them effectively requires genuine spirit and innovative educational practices. In the Vedic period, the gurukula system prevailed in which the student has to thoroughly undergo a pattern life with the guru shishya hierarchy. Whatever the guru declares are the values of life. But in the modern context, which is supposed to be the democratic sphere, a sense of equality and freedom has to prevail the learning situation. Also the values identified cannot be preached on the basis of the religious faiths. So the teacher has to find effective working module to internalize the values in the minds of the youth. The teachers' understanding about the values prescribed and his/her commitment in imparting them also play a crucial role here. How to sensitize the teacher before carrying the values to the students is also a challenge to the educationists. The value education class room, if it is dealt with full seriousness and sincerity would be very interesting and challenging sphere for students and teachers. At times they need to sail at the same level with the students. The hierarchy may get disappeared. Value education demands a total responsibility from the teachers. They become more accountable. On the other side, a teacher who is committed to a set of values would always like to preach and impose them on the young minds. That extreme should also to be avoided with a balance of mind. Value education cannot be done by just delivering lectures and screening films. It requires a strong interaction between the students and the society. A lot could be experimented at this sphere. For which the supreme value 'integrity' is expected from the educator.

It is observed that many modules of teaching values have been designed and tested. Some are seemed to be very effective. In Tamilnadu, especially in aided colleges, with all good intention the government has introduced the value education as a compulsory scheme at the undergraduate level. But each university has its own syllabus for the same. The scrutiny of those syllabi also reveals a lot of variations in conceiving the value education. In some universities, some religion based institutions are given the responsibility of designing and even carrying out the course. Similarly the teachers who have not been exposed to any such type of training in value education are given the responsibility of teaching values. The introduction of value education for all under graduate courses is done at the cost of a core paper of that course. The teachers who have been handling their hardcore subject papers had to meet the shortage of workload due to this programme and to solve this problem, they have been entrusted with the job of teaching value education paper. This is done with the aim of avoiding the workload problem of existing

teachers. The most valuable and sensitive part of education has been made like a mechanical dogmatic part. At this juncture, the fate of value education at the college level could be imagined. How to solve this issue is again a challenge to the educationists of Tamilnadu. The same fate could be observed in many other states of India. Hence, two important problems surfaces here, one at the syllabus level and the other at the teaching level. As it is discussed earlier the syllabus could be designed by way of paying attention to all aspects but imparting the same requires not only innovative teaching methods, but also innovative training method of the educators. It is as good as training the driver to drive the car; the teacher needs to be trained in imparting the values. The technical education employs teachers with sound knowledge in the subject, similarly it is essential to have teachers with sound mind and creative teaching skill to teach value education. Value education is definitely not to be dealt with compartmentalization but it should be taken as a part of the whole educational system. As Nietzsche puts it, the society requires masters to create and impart values, not the slaves who accept all the values imposed on them without any critical understanding.

If education fails to impart necessary values to its citizens, it will definitely have a telling effect on the society. All efforts to bring just and peace in the world will become futile if proper value education is not imparted.

Source: Madurai /luiguicarrillo.com/31 August 2010

NEWS

Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan

The Centrally sponsored scheme "Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA)" was launched in March, 2009 to enhance access to secondary education and to improve its quality. It seeks to ensure availability of secondary schools within reasonable distance of every habitation, improve quality to education imparted at secondary stage and reduce disparities related to gender, socio-economic status, geographical location and disability. The sharing pattern between the Centre and the States during the 11th Five Year Plan is 75:25, while for the north-eastern States, the ratio is 90:10, Rs.550 crore (RE) was provided for this scheme in 2009-10. The budget provision kept for 2010-11 is Rs.1700 crore.

The total allocation for secondary education has been increased from Rs.4,325 crore in the 10th Plan to Rs.53,550 crore in the 11th Plan, and several new centrally sponsored schemes including RMSA, Model School, Girls' Hostel, National Means-Cum-Merit Scholarship and Incentive to Girls for Secondary Education have been launched during the 11th Plan.

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

Source: New Delhi /pib.nic.in/18 August 2010

Revival of Heritage Schools

During the freedom struggle eminent educational thinkers in different parts of the country had started a number of innovative schools. Many such schools are languishing due to unsustainability of innovative ideas and ethos marked by a persistent pressure to conform and lack of financial resources.

National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) had taken up a programme, for revival of such heritage schools. These schools are selected from among those (i) founded during Indian freedom movement inspired by nationalist educational philosophy, (ii) representing a heritage of innovating pedagogy, (iii) having innovating learning material using local knowledge, (iv) inculcating dignity of labour, (v) attempting all round development of personalities, (vi) engaging actively with local community and (vii) instilling values of democratic participation. The selected heritage schools were provided academic and financial support and its impact was monitored periodically. During 2007-08, five schools were supported with financial assistance of Rs.2 lakh each.

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

Source: New Delhi /pib.nic.in/18 August 2010

Setting up of Polytechnics

The Government has approved a Scheme to provide financial assistance to the State Governments/UTs for setting up of new polytechnics in 300 un-served and under-served districts of the country. These polytechnics are to be set up by the concerned States/Union Territories Government in these districts. Out of 300 districts, 228 districts have been already provided financial assistance till 2009-10. In addition, Government has also approved establishment of 700 polytechnics through Public Private Partnership mode and private funding.

Under the Scheme of Submission, the Government and Government aided polytechnics in the country are eligible to receive financial assistance for up-gradation of infrastructure facilities. A plan allocation of Rs. 1000 crore has been approved in the XI Plan for providing financial assistance to 500 polytechnics subject to a maximum of Rs. 2.00 crore per polytechnic.

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

Source: New Delhi /pib.nic.in/18 August 2010

Expert panel to look into autonomy for central universities, IITs, IIMs

The HRD ministry has set up a high-power committee, under noted legal expert N R Madhava Menon, to come with a comprehensive policy on the issue of autonomy for higher educational institutions like central universities, IITs and IIMs.

The six-member committee, which also has three additional special invitees, has been asked to review the state of institutional autonomy in central universities, IITs and IIMs in academic governance and financial matters.

The panel will recommend mechanism for norm-based funding of central educational institutions for development and maintenance, with an aim to enhance their financial autonomy.

It will examine the decentralisation of autonomy within central universities, IITs, IIMs and suggest measures by which institutional autonomy can percolate to governance structure within the university and to the teacher.

The committee will review the present governance structures of central universities, IITs, IIMs, and recommend steps for providing substantive and procedural autonomy to them vis-a-vis University Grants Commission (UGC), other central regulatory bodies and the central government.

It will also decide how to foster accountability so that they can function as public institutions.

The committee consists of Seyed Hasnain, vice-chancellor, Hyderabad University; Pankaj Chandra, director, IIM, Bangalore; M S Ananth, director, IIT, Madras; Mihir Choudhary, vice-chancellor, Tezpur University and Ved Prakash, vice-chairperson, UGC. Prakash will be the convenor of the committee. While UGC chairperson S Thorat, AICTE chairperson S S Mantha and IGNOU vice-chancellor V N Rajasekharan Pillai are the special invitees.

Source: New Delhi /timesofindia/19 August 2010

Faculty crunch at premier institutes, admits Sibal

Premier educational institutes like the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) and the Indian Institute of Management (IIM) are facing a faculty crunch with nearly one-third of the posts vacant, the Lok Sabha was informed Wednesday.

Around 35 percent posts are vacant in the central universities, 25 percent in the IIMs, 33.33 percent in the National Institute of Technology and 35.1 percent in other central education institutions coming up under the Human Resource Development (HRD) Ministry, HRD Minister Kapil Sibal informed the Lok Sabha in a written reply.

However, the minister denied any decision to start an Indian Education Service to meet to the shortage.

"There is no decision of the government for creation of the Indian Education Service. Although the National Education Policy, 1986, provides for the establishment of Indian Education Services as an all-India service, however, as there was no consensus among the state governments, it could not be established," Sibal said.

However, the minister said short-term measures like raising the retirement age in teaching posts from 62 to 65 years and enhancement in salaries and other benefits for teachers are being taken by the government.

"Several long-term measures have also been initiated for attracting young people to opt for this (teaching) career.

These include, enhancement in fellowships and attractive start-up grants in various disciplines," Sibal added.

Source: New Delhi /education.in.msn.com/19 August 2010

University teachers to retire at 65, rules HC

The Patna high court on Friday directed the state government to follow the recent regulation framed by the University Grants Commission (UGC) for enhancing the retirement age of university teachers from 62 years to 65 years with effect from June 30, 2010.

A single bench presided by Justice Navneeti Prasad Singh held the teachers who retired on or after June 30, 2010 would get the benefit of the enhancement of retirement age.

The verdict came on the writ petitions of college teachers DC Baluni, RP Vidyarthi and AK Thakur. Petitioners' counsel Abhinav Srivastava pleaded that the UGC regulation was formalised on June 30 and, as such, June 30 should be the cutoff date for increasing retirement age.

The court also held valid the petitioners' plea that under Section 67A of the Bihar State Universities Act, UGC regulations, deemed to be UGC's decisions, are applicable in entire country, including Bihar.

Earlier, a single bench presided by Justice Mridula Mishra had directed that the retirement age of university teachers be increased to 65 years on the basis of UGC recommendations.

The state government challenged the judgment of Justice Mishra in an LPA on the ground that merely a recommendation of UGC was not enough. After hearing the state plea, a division bench presided by then CJ Dipak Mishra had held that a clear mandate for increasing the retirement age of university teachers was possible only when the UGC framed a regulation for the purpose.

That the UGC framed the regulation on June 30 this year prompted the fresh writ petitions on which Friday's verdict came.

Source: Patna /timesofindia/21 August 2010

Deemed universities-like scam in teacher training institutes

It has the makings of another educational scam, almost like the one involving deemed universities. The only difference is that it relates to teacher education.

The indictment comes from a high-powered committee of the HRD ministry that went into the functioning of Northern Regional Centre of National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) and found massive irregularities in granting recognition to teacher training institutes and even disregard for the parent organization.

Irregularities and corruption in NRC had its impact on teacher education in six states — Haryana, Himachal, Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Delhi and the UT of Chandigarh — all of whom fall under its

jurisdiction. "A similar situation prevails in other regional committees of NCTE and soon their functioning will also be reviewed," a source said.

The committee has recommended repatriation of the current regional director and action against errant officials. It has also said NRC be reconstituted and wide-ranging procedural changes be brought in. Even NCTE has been criticized for its failure to monitor the functioning of NRC.

The committee, headed by a joint secretary of the HRD ministry, said NRC delayed issuing deficiency letters to institutions seeking NCTE approval. NCTE regulation of 2009 states that deficiency letter be issued within 45 days whereas in case of 20 institutions, such communication was sent after two-three months. NCR also delayed its communication to the state government seeking its clearance within a month. This also happened in case of 20 institutions. In cases where deficiencies were pointed out, the review committee found that it was done without proper examination of fact on records. Even the NRC regional director has been blamed for failing to notice that deficiencies being pointed out were not correct. The NRC communicated deficiencies which were vague and did not specify the exact nature of deficiency, the report said; citing vague deficiencies like details in land document did not match with details in affidavit and so on.

In what indicates manipulation, the HRD committee also found that as per NCTE norms, applications seeking clearance were not processed chronologically and even the well-laid out system of preparing comprehensive agenda notes highlighting the proposal, comments of the visiting team, recommendation of state governments were not followed.

Almost like UGC's role in giving deemed university status to private institutions, the committee found lack of consistency in decision-making. The panel pointed out that in one meeting of NRC, it decided to refuse recognition to one institute for lacking infrastructure but in the same meeting, another institute with similar deficiencies was issued notice.

Source: New Delhi /timesofindia/23 August 2010

Std X pass-outs to get special ID nos

Even as the government of India has embarked on an ambitious project to provide a unique identification number to all its citizens, the Maharashtra government is seriously considering a similar proposal for its students.

The Maharashtra Knowledge Corporation Limited (MKCL) a company promoted by Maharashtra's Higher and Technical Education Department, which has handled online admissions to junior college for the last two years wrote to the chief minister last week proposing a system whereby every child who passes Std X gets a Unique Student Registration Number.

This will help create a students digital footprint with a system that manages a students entire education profile. Whether a student opts for higher education, technical education, arts, agriculture, or for that matter any

professional field, his qualifications will automatically be added to his profile, said Vivek Sawant, managing director of MKCL, talking to reporters on the sidelines of a function to celebrate its tenth anniversary.

Students climbing the higher education ladder have complained of the numerous admission forms they need to fill out at every stage of their education. The registration number will eliminate the need to fill out admission forms after Std X, as a student's entire profile will be stored, once and for all, on a centralised system. So when it comes to applying to a college, a student will have to fill out his choice of institution and stream.

Every time students opt for a new degree, they won't need to fill out forms specifying whether they are male or female, date of birth, etc, said Sawant. Every new degree that students acquire will be reflected in their digital profile.

MKCL wants to implement this system, not only for children who have passed their SSC exams, but even students from national boards such as ICSE and CBSE who are studying in Maharashtra. Currently, MKCL wants to tie up with the government of Maharashtra to provide this service to students who will pursue further education within the state. At a later stage, they may consider tying up with other states so that the qualifications of a student from Maharashtra who migrates to another state will also show up on his digital profile.

This isn't the only country where such a system has been conceptualised. Australia is also mulling over such a system of unique IDs for students.

Conduct exams online wherever possible. A year after the Common Entrance Test to the prestigious Indian Institutes of Technology went online for the first time, the Maharashtra Knowledge Corporation Limited (MKCL) has come up with a proposal to conduct all university exams online wherever possible and declare the results instantly.

There are several problems with the current pen-and-paper examination system that can be rectified if the exams go online. For starters, the current examination system forces students to cram their textbooks. Simply memorizing a subject does not equal to true understanding of it. Online exams can help test what a student actually knows, said Vivek Sawant, managing director of MKCL.

According to him, the present examination system involves a lengthy process, plagued with problems such as paper leaks, mass copying, non-availability of examiners and mistakes in the results, which take a long time to rectify. All these problems can be solved if university exams were to go online, Sawant added.

Source: Mumbai /timesofindia/23 August

HRD ministry seeks overhaul of engineering distance courses

In a bid to substantially overhaul engineering and management education through distance mode, the HRD ministry has said any approval of these courses by Distance Education Council will have to be done jointly by

the tripartite committee of University Grants Commission (UGC), All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) and Distance Education Council (DEC).

In case of the Indira Gandhi National Open University (Ignou) — the largest university imparting distance education — the ministry has said though it does not require AICTE clearance, Ignou will have to follow its regulations. The ministry has also set up a committee under noted legal expert N R Madhava Menon to suggest how to resolve overlapping areas of work among the three regulators — UGC, AICTE and DEC. AICTE regulations will specify how to carry out management and engineering courses in the distance mode.

"It will spell out how much of the course should be done through classroom teaching, laboratory work and distance modes," a source said, adding engineering cannot be done without laboratory experience. The ministry's decision comes in the wake of widespread complaints against institutes imparting management and engineering courses in the distance mode without seeking the mandated clearance from AICTE.

The Central Vigilance Commission's (CVC) report on a series of allegations against IGNOU vice-chancellor V N Rajasekharan Pillai also pointed out that the university did not take prior approval of the UGC-AICTE-DEC committee in case of NIMS University, Jaipur, and instead issued a letter of approval himself. IGNOU VC is also the chairperson of DEC.

In another case, relating to the Sikkim Manipal University (SMU), CVC said the compliance report by SMU was not placed before the UGC-AICTE-DEC panel.

Subsequently, it asked the ministry to identify concerned officials in SMU, and revert to the commission.

Source: New Delhi /timesofindia/24 August 2010

State planning to set up country's first vocational university, says minister

The Maharashtra government is considering a move to set up the first of its kind vocational university in the country, said minister for higher and technical education Rajesh Tope here on Tuesday.

Through such university, the government will promote establishment of colleges, which will offer degrees in a range of vocational trades, he said.

"The move will ensure an apt social status for students passing out with degrees in vocational studies besides facilitating vertical mobility for those passing Stds XI and XII with vocational subjects," said Tope. "As of now, such students have no option but to join conventional arts, science or commerce streams after Std XII," he said.

The minister was in the city to attend a recruitment fair for the successful as well as failed higher secondary certificate (HSC) students from vocational stream. The fair was organised by the Pune district vocational education office at the Abasaheb Garware College. Later, Tope also attended

a ceremony for distribution of certificates to 42 students from the Symbiosis Community College's Their branch on their completion of a six-month course in functional english speaking, at the Symbiosis Centre for Distance Learning (SCDL). Director of vocational education S G Dewadkar and Symbiosis founder head S B Mujumdar were present.

"The department of higher and technical education was no more keen on granting new colleges in conventional arts, science and commerce streams looking at the issue of burgeoning educated unemployment. We haven't granted a single such college this year and we plan to pursue this approach in future too," said Tope.

"The thrust, instead, has to be on promoting vocational skills that not only add value to the academic knowledge acquired by students but also raise the prospect of their employability in the industry and other professional fields," he said. The prevailing content for certificate and diploma courses in vocational streams can be upgraded and brought to the level required for colleges, to set up vocational colleges at strategic locations especially in rural areas, he said.

"We require need-based education, which can meet the socio-economic requirements of specific areas. If we can give such education in rural areas, then it will go a long way in arresting the rural-to-urban migration besides contributing to the growth of rural economy," Tope said at the SCDL function.

"The community colleges, which emphasise on developing job-oriented skills among those students, who have been left out of the academic mainstream for some reason or the other, have an important role to play. However, barring a few institutions, there haven't been many takers for community colleges," he said.

A key reason behind such reluctance on the part of the institutions is, the economic viability of community colleges under the present scheme. "We need to accord a vocational training provider (VTP) status to the community colleges that are to be set up in future. This will ensure course-wise funds from the Union government as well as reimbursement of course fee for students. The institutions will have little burden to take," said Tope. He promised all possible support and help in grant of VTP status to institutions desiring to set up community colleges.

Earlier, SCDL chief Swati Mujumdar gave an overview about the Symbiosis' initiatives towards setting up community colleges. S B Mujumdar cited the need for the government to set up vocational universities and colleges. Legislator Vandana Chavan, former CII Pune chapter president Pradeep Bhargava, district vocational education officer C A Ninale and others were present.

Source: Pune /timesofindia/25 August 2010

Law to fix bogus courses, colleges

The state government is very serious about cracking down on all bogus or unauthorised institutes and colleges. By the end of the year, it will bring in a law to ensure such

institutes are permanently shut down. Colleges and institutes that offer affordable courses and job guarantees are a dime a dozen in the city. The lure is the attractive advertising and fees, but at the end of it the certificate is worth nothing. A majority of these courses are to do with air hostess training, hospitality, management, and so on.

All authorised colleges in the state are registered with the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) and the Maharashtra Directorate of Technical Education (DTE), where their course material is standardised. The law that the government is formulating will make owners of unauthorised or bogus institutes pay a heavy penalty, face jail terms and have their institutes shut down.

"Many of these bogus colleges and institutes have no facilities, no infrastructure and are not even recognised. They just float courses that students take up without realising the downside. We are bringing in a law called the 'Maharashtra Unauthorised Colleges Act' to take action against such college managements and close them down permanently," said State Higher and Technical Education Minister Rajesh Tope.

Tope said his department was in the process of forming a law that will be brought to the cabinet for approval and be cleared as a bill by the end of the year.

"Under the present law we cannot take action against such institutes and have to call in the police. Also, there is no mechanism to keep such colleges and institutes in check," he said.

So, in addition to the law, the department will set up a separate monitoring cell under DTE that will continuously monitor such institutes. "Both DTE and AICTE put up a list of authorised colleges and courses on their websites, which are updated every year. Students should check these sites before enrolling for a course," Tope added.

Source: Mumbai /hindustantimes.com/26 August 2010

State asks AICTE not to give nod for new colleges from next year

1.5 lakh admitted to 471 colleges this year, 8,172 seats vacant under government quota

The State government has asked All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) not to grant permission to new engineering colleges from next year in Tamil Nadu, said K. Ponmudy, Minister for Higher Education. The State's decision has come in the wake of a record number of estimated 1.5 lakh students admitted to 471 engineering colleges, including 1.12 lakh under government quota in Tamil Nadu Engineering Admissions (TNEA) 2010, the highest intake in any State in the country, Mr. Ponmudy said.

Disclosing details of TNEA 2010, the Minister said the number of seats falling vacant this year under government quota was 8,172, which was roughly 6.8 per cent of the total seats, compared to over 30,000 last year. The scrapping of common entrance exam in 2006 and the

government decision to waive tuition fee for first generation professional degree learners were the main reasons for the increased intake, he said.

A staggering 71,590 first generation professional degree learners have got admission, registering an increase of 26,311 since last year. As many as 54,460 students, who pursued higher secondary in Tamil medium, have joined engineering colleges. In the Tamil medium civil and mechanical courses offered in Anna University constituent colleges, 1,378 students have enrolled.

The number of rural students entering the portals of engineering education has also increased to 76,073 this year. In fact, the number of rural students in engineering has seen a steady increase from the time the common entrance exam was cancelled. In 2005, only 17,990 students, about 52.72 per cent, from rural areas entered engineering colleges. In the subsequent years, the numbers rose to 24,670; 34,069; 50,589; 54,073 and finally, 76,073 in 2010, up to 67.79 per cent of admissions. Lowering the eligibility marks helped 1,598 students take up engineering.

As many as 1.69 lakh students had applied for admission through the single window system this year of which 1.65 lakh students were eligible. There will be no more counselling for engineering seats. The AICTE had granted 24 new colleges this year, Mr. Ponmudy said.

K. Ganesan, Principal Secretary, Higher Education; P. Mannar Jawahar, Vice-Chancellor, Anna University, and Kumar Jayant, Commissioner, Technical Education, and TNEA Secretary V. Rhymend Uthariaraj were present.

Source: Chennai /hindu.com/26 August 2010

Kakodkar to head panel for revamp of higher education

The who's who of Maharashtra's scientific and academic communities, led by former Atomic Energy Commission chief Anil Kakodkar, will now work on a comprehensive report recommending measures to improve quality and standards of higher and professional education in the state.

The idea is to effect the much-needed changes in the state's higher and professional education sector that are in tune with the emerging concepts and challenges thrown by economic liberalisation, globalisation and privatisation processes.

Being futuristic, research-oriented, competitive and capable of raising the employability of students passing out of institutions of higher learning will be at the core of the revamp exercise. Already, the human resource development (HRD) ministry has presented three crucial bills in Parliament, including the one that seeks the entry of foreign education providers (FEPs) in the country.

The University of Pune (UoP) will be the hub of such revamp exercise while the university's vice-chancellor (V-C), R K Shevgaonkar, has been named convenor of the 11-member core committee, under Kakodkar. This was

announced by Mahesh Pathak, secretary to department for higher and technical education, through a government resolution (GR) posted on its website on Thursday.

Former CSIR director-general Raghunath Mashelkar, former UGC chief Arun Nigavekar, computer expert Vijay Bhatkar, National Chemical Laboratory director S Sivaram and former UoP V-Cs Ram Takwale and Ashok Kolaskar are the prominent names from Pune to figure in the core committee.

University of Mumbai V-C Rajan Velukar, international consultant Nitin Pujar and former secretary to HRD ministry Kumud Bansal are the other members of the committee.

The GR lays down a formal roadmap for what was so far being talked about by the minister for higher and technical education Rajesh Tope as well as senior officials from the department about the impending reforms in higher and professional education.

At successive meetings of the Joint Board of Vice Chancellors (JBVC), which is presided over by Maharashtra governor and chancellor, an overwhelming concern was raised about the falling standards of education, mainly across the 13 non-agriculture state universities.

The problem was manifested in the poor record of the universities towards regularly updating their syllabi, getting the colleges to secure ratings from bodies like National Assessment and Accreditation Council and the National Board of Accreditation, absence of need-based courses that meet the industries and society's requirement and failure to appoint qualified and approved teachers.

Source: Pune /timesofindia/27 August 2010

Post school, a seven-year Ph.D. programme

You may soon get to join some of the country's top colleges and graduate — with a PhD. India's top brand of science institutions is looking at offering programmes that, for the first time, will allow students straight out of school to graduate with PhDs in under seven years, under a government plan to lure the best brains back to research.

The Human Resource Development Ministry has proposed that the Indian Institutes of Science Education and Research introduce programmes that combine undergraduate, postgraduate and PhD research in a single course, top government sources told **HT**.

The ministry is scheduled to discuss the proposal with the IISERs directors on September 7, they said. Loosely modeled on the IIS, Bangalore, the IISERs in Kolkata, Mohali, Bhopal and Thiruvananthapuram — were set up on the recommendation of the PM's Scientific Advisory Committee.

Currently, they offer five-year integrated Masters in Science programmes — like in US universities — that allow students who join after school to leave with postgraduate degrees. Under the new proposal, programmes can be extended by 18 months to six-and-a-half years.

"Many people drop out of science after graduation or masters. Here, they have an unparalleled incentive — stay a little longer, carry out research and get a PhD," a source said.

This would also mean students don't have to reapply for postgraduate studies and PhDs. But not all in the IISERs are convinced that students can complete the programme in six-and-a-half years.

"While the school-to-PhD plan is workable in principle, I'm not confident students can complete their PhDs in so short a time," IISER Bhopal director Vinod Singh said, adding that students usually take four years to complete their PhDs alone.

Source: New Delhi /hindustantimes.com/27 August 2010

Virtual classroom offers US school degree in Indian homes

Imagine securing a US high school diploma without even stepping out of your home in India! As India attempts to go international in the field of education, here is a virtual classroom straight from America.

The American International Academy, a US-based online education academy, is offering the diploma - the US equivalent of a Class 12 certificate - at a time when many Indians are queuing up for American degrees. Over 100,000 Indian students went to the US last year for higher studies.

"This diploma will bring Indian students at par with their American counterparts," J. Donald Williams, chairman of the American International Academy (AIA), told IANS. Only those who have completed Class 10 under an Indian board can enroll for this course.

Williams is on a visit to India with Ron Klink, a former member of the US Congress (1993 to 2001), for taking ahead the virtual school.

"By enrolling in this programme, Indian students will be eligible for preferential admission in US universities and colleges, at par with students in the US," Williams said.

The AIA started in 2000 when the closure of steel mills in Midland, Pennsylvania, forced the local administration to close the schools there due to fund shortage.

"We could not support the school financially as the revenue from the steel mills stopped. The children had to go to a school across the border in another state; that was very embarrassing," says Klink.

"We started to educate them online in Pennsylvania. Gradually, it expanded to the whole of the US," says Klink, adding there are nearly 20,000 students enrolled with it in the US.

The academy, which was formally launched in India in March this year, is now in dialogue with the human resource development ministry and the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) to adapt the curriculum to Indian needs.

Source: New Delhi /economictimes/28 August 2010

Universities for innovation: Sibal meets stakeholders

Keen to build up India's higher education and research infrastructure, the ministry of human resource development took another step towards giving concrete shape to the concept of "universities for innovation".

The human resource development minister Kapil Sibal met with stakeholders, experts and academics on Saturday to discuss the legislation setting up these universities.

A draft of the legislation had already been circulated. Part of the effort to make India a global education hub, each Innovation University will be built around a theme or subject. It is proposed that these institutions will have total autonomy in appointments, collaborations, resource generation and nomenclature of degrees.

At Saturday's consultation it was decided that similar efforts would have to be made to help existing institutions achieve world class standards in teaching, research and innovation. Those present suggested that the draft Universities for Innovation Bill needs to be modified and outcomes more clearly specified and spelt out in the relevant provisions.

It was suggested that innovation and research outcomes should be "objective and verifiable". Private promoters suggested changes in the legislation to "ensure that the initiative and energy of promoters is not stifled in an excess regulatory framework".

There was agreement on the fact that there was no harm in setting up solution based institutions, with one or more themes as the guiding core principle but that they should still benefit the community at large. For this purpose these universities should have broader, generic base in terms of structure and programme.

Source: New Delhi <http://economictimes/29 August 2010>

Uncertainty over pact on Chinese degrees

Concerns that China may swamp India's higher education, amid the current diplomatic uneasiness, may delay mutual recognition of academic degrees, a proposal the two countries are to discuss in September, senior government officials have said. Officials have confirmed that mutual recognition of academic degrees is on Human Resource Development Minister Kapil Sibal's agenda during a visit to China from September 10-16, as was reported by HT first on August 28. But the pact may not be signed during Sibal's visit, the ministry has now cautioned.

Officially, the government is mum about the reasons why it is treading with caution over the pact — which would benefit thousands of Indian students in China. These students will not need to worry about the recognition of their degrees if the pact is signed.

But sources pointed out that the government — while sensitive to the needs of Indian students — also have to

consider other consequences of a pact mutually recognising degrees. "We have to recognise the needs of Indian students in China but also have to be prepared for the larger implications of recognising Chinese degrees," a source said.

Sections within the government are concerned that recognising Chinese degrees at this stage could allow China to possibly swamp the Indian higher education market when it is growing faster than ever. This could hurt Indian higher education institutions — public and private — irreparably, source said.

Several Chinese institutions offer the lure of better facilities than Indian counterparts, with lesser fees than universities in the west or Australia.

Recent diplomatic uneasiness hasn't helped, sources said. "Mutual suspicion and mutual recognition of degrees don't go well together," a former education secretary said.

Source: New Delhi /hindustantimes.com/31 August 2010

Education Tribunal Bill put off

The Centre was forced to defer the educational tribunal bill in the Rajya Sabha on Tuesday, following opposition from members.

The Education Tribunal Bill, 2010, which was passed in the Lok Sabha last week, was introduced in the Rajya Sabha by Human Resource Development Minister Kapil Sibal. However, the minister had to beat a hasty retreat after it came under attack from members, cutting across political lines.

"Considering the sentiments of the honourable members of this House, I request that the consideration of the bill be deferred to the next session," Sibal said.

At the same time, the minister allayed the apprehensions expressed by the Opposition saying: "We are not in anyway infringing upon the rights of the states. It's a significant piece of legislation. And if members want a larger debate, we have no problem."

When the bill dealing with key education reforms was introduced in the Lok Sabha during the previous session, it was referred to a Parliamentary Standing Committee for scrutiny. After incorporating some of the recommendations of the committee, it was reintroduced in the Lok Sabha last week.

However, in the Rajya Sabha, where the UPA does not enjoy a majority, the bill came under all-round attack from members, including the ruling Congress. Members alleged that despite the Parliamentary Standing Committee making several recommendations, most of them were not incorporated.

Members from the BJP, Congress and the Bahujan Samaj Party said the government should not rush the bill in a hasty manner and the committee's recommendations should not be ignored.

Congress member K Keshava Rao took strong objection to the ministry rejecting the report of the standing committee.

Describing the committee as "mini-Parliament", Rao said if the report of such a panel is rejected and the House is not even told, it is unacceptable.

The bill proposes to set up a two-tier structure of educational tribunals at the national and state levels to adjudicate disputes that arise in the higher education system.

The tribunals will act as forums for fast-track and speedy resolution of issues in institutions in order to build an effective system of checks and balances in higher education.

While state tribunals will deal with matters concerning teachers, employees and students of institutions in the respective states, the national tribunal will deal with matters concerning regulatory bodies in higher education.

Source: New Delhi/deccanherald.com/31 August 2010

ANALYSIS/OPINION/INNOVATIVE PRACTICE

Put people first

Independence Day observations are usually marked by nostalgia and patriotism-invoking noble thoughts. Mahatma Gandhi's desire to "wipe every tear from every eye", Jawaharlal Nehru's "tryst with destiny", Sardar Patel's claim that "no one would die of starvation in independent India", Maulana Abul Kalam Azad's exhortations for Hindu-Muslim unity as the basis for humanity's future and Nehru's invocation of the ancient palimpsest in his *Discovery of India* to describe India as the churning crucible of human civilisation have all found their usual place. Though there are references to B.R. Ambedkar, what's missing is the warning he gave when he presented the draft of our Constitution. I shall return to this subsequently. However, with more than six decades down the line, the need to introspect on how far we have reached the aspirations that fed our freedom struggle cannot be escaped. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, addressing the nation from the Red Fort this Independence Day, concluded by saying: "The day when our dreams will come true is not far off."

Does this reflect the reality? Our modern republic is founded on secular democracy, federalism, social justice and economic self-reliance. Where do we stand today on each one of these foundational pillars?

It is impossible to cover all aspects. Let's take the salient ones. Our agricultural sector is still predominantly dependent on the vagaries of the monsoon. The last two decades saw public investment in agriculture dropping to an abysmal less than 2 per cent of the GDP annually. The agrarian crisis continues to intensify with distress suicides by our farmers not abating. The huge stock of foodgrain in central government godowns does not reflect excessive

production. It tells the story of the bulk of our people not having enough money to buy this foodgrain.

It is, indeed, a matter of shame for our country that the Supreme Court had to repeatedly urge the Centre to distribute foodgrains that are rotting in the open free to the people. It has been shown that in 2008-09, the per capita availability of food for direct consumption had dropped to around 136 kg per annum. Way back in 1989, this figure stood at 193 kg. Are we moving in the direction of self-reliance as Sardar Patel envisioned?

Even after six decades, the condition of the SC/STs (despite the continuation of reservations) has not improved to the desired levels. The quotas are never fulfilled with respect to government jobs, reaching only 17 as against 22.5 per cent. More than two-thirds of SC and three-fourths of ST children drop out of school before they reach Class 10. Their levels of poverty are nearly double than the rest.

One can go on in this vein, but the moot question is: are we, as a nation, incapable of doing any better? Of course not. One illustration would suffice. The developed world is very apprehensive of the fact that India today produces more skilled manpower annually than all the countries of the European Union put together. This is happening only when less than 10 per cent of our eligible youth are able to reach the portals of higher education. If we are able to raise this to even 30 per cent, then India, truly, will rise to lead the global knowledge society. This is our potential. What we need are policies that will make us realise this potential.

On the contrary, though we have legislated the Right to Education, the required financial resources to ensure this right is lacking. It has been estimated that in order to realise this right, R170,000 crore would be required over the next five years. While the central government raises the spectre of resource crunch, it unhesitatingly doles out tax concessions to corporates and the rich.

These admitted concessions in the budget papers of the last two years is much more than what would have been necessary for realising universal education and, thus, allowing India to realise its potential. Likewise, the reforms proposed for higher education will only encourage further privatisation and commercialisation, making education more of a privilege than a right.

The need for a radical shift in the policy direction reflects the continued battle between the three visions that emerged during the course of our freedom struggle. The Congress envisioned a secular democratic republic. The Left goes beyond this to convert the political independence of our country into the economic independence of our people, i.e. socialism. Completely antagonistic is the third vision that seeks to define the character of India on the basis of the religious denomination of its people.

This found a twin expression with the RSS advocating a Hindu Rashtra and the Muslim League having, unfortunately, succeeded in the partition of the country to

establish an Islamic republic. Clearly, if India has to realise its potential, then in this ideological battle — the vision that economically empowers our people — has to establish its dominance.

The continuing Maoist violence and the unfortunate developments in Kashmir reinforce Ambedkar's warning. "On the 26th of January 1950, we are going to enter into a life of contradictions. In politics we will have equality and in social and economic life we will have inequality. In politics, we will be recognising the principle of one man-one vote and one vote-one value.

In our social and economic life, we shall by reason of our social and economic structure continue to deny the principle of one man-one value. How long shall we continue to live this life of contradictions? How long shall we continue to deny equality in our social and economic life? If we continue to deny it for long, we will do so only by putting our political democracy in peril."

Source: New Delhi /hindustantimes.com/16 August 2010

Address issue of access to higher education: UGC

Acknowledging the rapid rise of private sector's participation in higher education, the University Grants Commission (UGC) on Tuesday stressed the need for addressing the issue of its access to wider sections through an appropriate policy mechanism.

"Private participation in higher education is expanding very fast, particularly in technical and vocational education. The issue of private participation in higher education needs to be well-defined," UGC Chairman Sukhdeo Thorat said here.

"Fee structure of private educational institutes is beyond the reach of the poor. We will have to ensure those from the poor sections desiring to pursue higher education are not denied opportunities, and also that private institutes provide quality education," he said.

Speaking at the 78th convocation of the Osmania University here, Thorat said a target of 15 per cent enrolment rate in higher education -- equivalent to seven million more students by 2012 (end of 11th Five-Year Plan) -- has been set.

He said the Union Human Resource Development Ministry is working on a target of 30 per cent enrolment by 2020.

Increase in enrolment will have to come from groups like girls, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, OBC and the poor who have low access to higher education, he said

Source: Hyderabad /deccanherald.com/17 August 2010

Let more diploma holders be engineers

The state government has asked the Centre to increase the intake of diploma students into engineering courses from the present 10 per cent to 15 per cent through lateral entry.

After distributing prizes to students on Monday for excellence in various diploma courses, Higher Education Minister Aravind Limbavali said through lateral entry, diploma candidates could join second year engineering courses directly.

He said the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), which had allowed 15 per cent of diploma candidates to various engineering courses last year, had fixed the intake to 10 per cent this year.

The minister said the Karnataka Examination Authority had last year received 14,575 applications from diploma holders for engineering courses. He said the number of such applications had shot up to 16,865 this year.

“We have written to Union HRD Minister Kapil Sibal.

He said that no state in India has such a demand and asked why there is so much demand in Karnataka. But we have demand. I am meeting him personally with a request to increase intake of diploma candidates,” Limbavali said.

He said this year, due to the 10 per cent cap, KEA was left with 8,542 seats.

“Last year private college managements had surrendered more than 1,500 seats as they were not filled. We will give these seats to diploma candidates as they can get admitted to second year,” he said.

Source: Bangalore /expressbuzz.com/17 August 2010

Back to the roots to grow some more

Tristha Ramamurthy always nurtured a passion for education. She watched her mum, Sabita Ramamurthy, set up CMR Jnanadhara Trust's first school (National Junior Public School) at Kacharakannahalli with just five kids. Having grown up in that setting, she always wanted to be a part of it. “I watched CMR grow with me,” says the 20-something who is now the vice president of the CMR Group of Institutions.

So strong was the tie to Indian education that after an MA in Education from Stanford University, Palo Alto, California, Ramamurthy returned to Bangalore, her home, to work with the CMR Jnanadhara Trust run by her family.

From one school in 1990, today the CMR group of institutions has a bouquet of institutions from Montessori and high school to business administration, engineering and law and educates nearly 12,000 students annually. Ramamurthy returned to further the CMR dream to facilitate her grandfather Chikka Muniappa Reddy's vision of transforming education in India.

After completing her schooling in Bangalore, Ramamurthy went on to do an undergraduate course at the Singapore Management University in political science and management. “This was a conscious choice for me, as I realised education and politics are intertwined. And if I intended to work in the sector — understanding the political environment would be crucial.”

Learning from the West

After her graduation, choosing to do a masters degree in education came naturally to Ramamurthy. Despite the fact that ground realities in India are vastly different from those in the US, she feels the degree from Stanford gives her a perspective of what can be/what should be vs. what it is.

“The Indian setting is challenging — and studying there gave me an insight into the system prevalent in the US and has enabled me to apply tools from there to better the condition of education here,” she says.

Currently, Ramamurthy is pursuing a doctorate at King's College, London. This, she says, will enable her to combine the best from the US and UK to be implemented here.

What next?

Ramamurthy's plans are centred on providing bigger and better educational opportunities. At present she is focusing her energies on getting CMR's K-12 schools (a designation for the sum of primary and secondary education i.e. from Kindergarten through 12th grade), Akya, off the ground. The first such is due for launch in a few months at a campus in JP Nagar.

In the near future, she also plans to kick off school adoption projects, where every K-12 school under the CMR banner will support two neighbourhood government schools. “We intend doing an infrastructure revamp of government schools, sharing resources and mentoring them,” says the young educationist.

Education in India

Education is the biggest catalyst for change; consequently making education accessible to all can pilot huge changes, feels Ramamurthy. “In that sense, the Right to Education Act is a noble intention that can enable just that. Nevertheless, it is fraught with many issues and requires an overhaul,” she says, stressing on the need for policy makers to work along with educators to tighten the loopholes before it goes into practise. She also feels there is a need for the government to provide a clearer framework for the implementation of the Act. And, of course, “focus on improving the quality of education at government schools.”

Source: /dnaindia.com/17 August 2010

Common medical entrance test from next year: MCI

A common entrance test for students aspiring to study medicine is likely to be introduced from the next year, the Medical Council of India (MCI) said.

“The common entrance test for undergraduate and postgraduate students will soon be a reality. The health minister has approved (it). We are awaiting the notification to be issued. Once the notification is issued it should be implemented for 2010-2011,” MCI's Board of Governors' chief S.K. Sarin said.

The MCI has proposed a common entrance test (CET) for all medical colleges in the country. According to Sarin, it will cover the private as well as government medical colleges across the country. "It will be convenient for the students who presently have to take 10 to 15 different entrance tests," he said.

Ranks will be given to students on the basis of this test which will be used for admission in colleges all across the country. The move is also being seen as an attempt to bring an end to the management quota seats and other unfair means practiced in giving admission in private medical colleges.

"This test will ensure transparency, every college will have to take the students on the basis of the ranks," he said. However, the inclusion of All India Institute of Medical Sciences and other central medical colleges is not clear yet. "These institutes are not under MCI. We have proposed their inclusion," Sarin added.

The health ministry proposal comes as the human resource development ministry has proposed a common entrance test for medical as well as engineering. Sarin, however, said that the modalities of the CET are yet to be finalised and the council is in dialogue with Central Board of Secondary Education and HRD ministry as well. Reducing the burden on students is the main concern and it can be done in coordination with the HRD ministry, he said. "They can have common test for physics and chemistry. The modalities are yet to be finalised," he said.

Source: New Delhi /education.in.msn.com/18 August 2010

A new India in the making: PM

An India which would be prosperous, in which all citizens would live a life of honour and dignity, in peace and goodwill where problems would be solved through democratic means and basic rights of the people protected.

"We are building a new India in which every citizen would have a stake," announced the Prime Minister from the ramparts of the historic Red Fort. An India which would be prosperous, in which all citizens would live a life of honour and dignity, in peace and goodwill where problems would be solved through democratic means and basic rights of the people protected. The occasion was the 64th Independence Day of India- a proud moment for all Indians.

Indeed, the country is on the march towards this goal. A lot has been achieved through various programmes like the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act which assures 100 days of employment in a year in rural areas, the Right to Education, the Right to Information, 50 percent reservation for women in local bodies, protection and welfare of minorities, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes etc., through scholarships and special programmes. These have made a difference in peoples lives. India today stands among the fastest

growing economies of the world. Despite a drought like situation last year we faced the global economic slow down brilliantly.

But we are still far, far away from what we intend to achieve. As Dr. Manmohan Singh put it "we are faced with serious challenges." These need to be resolved. We cannot allow our society to get divided in the name of religion, state, caste or language, which generally happens.

The Prime Minister underlined the fact that after the Green Revolution about 40 years ago, through the efforts of agricultural scientist Norman Borlaug who commands a special place in the history of Indian agriculture, we have not witnessed any big technological breakthrough in Agriculture. It is time that we acquire technologies to address the needs of dry land farming, climate change, falling levels of ground water and deteriorating quality of soil. Dr. Manmohan Singh announced that the Borlaug Institute of South Asia is being established in India. It will facilitate availability of new and improved seeds and new technology to the farmers in India and other South Asian countries.

We have yet to achieve the 4 percent growth rate in agriculture. That calls for special attention to the farm sector. Support price for wheat was enhanced to Rs. 1100 per quintal from Rs. 630, last year. Paddy price too was almost doubled to Rs. 1000, to make farming remunerative for the farmers. But it has a side effect too-prices in the open market also increase. So, a fine balance is needed.

The Prime Minister admitted that inflation has caused difficulties to the people, especially when the prices of commodities of day to day use rise. But he emphasized that every possible effort was being made to tackle this problem. Steps to minimize the burden on poor in particular, were being taken. Dr. Manmohan Singh was confident of succeeding in these efforts.

The process of building a new India with our progressive social agenda and inclusive growth is well in the making. Dr. Singh said that today almost every child in our country has access to primary education and we now need to focus on secondary and higher education and improve the quality at every level. He announced a Bill would soon be brought to the Parliament for constitution of two separate councils in higher education and health, to accelerate reforms in these sectors. The children, he said, need to be taught the importance of cleanliness and hygiene in schools "from the very beginning under a campaign for a clean India."

He also spoke about the involvement of private sector in building physical infrastructure, like roads, ports and airports. "The resources required to create good physical infrastructure are difficult for government alone to mobilize," Dr. Singh said. This policy has started bearing fruit. Recently, a new world class terminal of the Delhi Airport was dedicated to the nation.

Obviously, peace is paramount for carrying forward these efforts. It was in this backdrop that the Prime Minister made fervent appeal to people in Kashmir, the North-East and

also the Naxals, to adopt peaceful, democratic methods in voicing their grievances and come to the negotiating table to discuss the issues. Violence does well to no one. Ultimately issues have to be resolved through negotiations. The sooner it is done the better it is.

It was with conviction that the Prime Minister said, "Our future is bright. The day our dreams will come true is not far off."

The words could as well turn out prophetic. But that requires a conscious effort on the part of all Indians to join hands, sink differences, resolve issues through peaceful means, keep the nations interests uppermost in their minds, bid farewell to corruption and behave in a truly secular and democratic way. If we are able to do that, realization of our dream is only a matter of time.

Source: /indiainfoline.com/19 August 2010

Education reform needs wider buy-in

It's a favourable climate for making changes in the Indian edu. system—a no-fail policy, open-book examinations, grading system. While the ministry of education has got us all — since we are all stakeholders in the future — thinking about what education really stands for, it's clear that the exam system will not leave us readily. This is because its history in our country is long and the new policies are trying to undo its very logic: its built-in incentive system, competition and clinical reproduction of information for the sake of measurable results. It is also well-aligned with the demands of the market and leads to a job.

Sure, everyone would love to see more creativity, less pressure, more soul in learning, but taking the system beyond exams requires serious imagination and patience. It's a process. And that's the real deal. It requires the participation of teachers from across states, boards and capacities. Instead, what we have are a few intellectuals, who gather to brainstorm and send in recommendations to Mr. Minister, while the ones who will eventually execute those recommendations (schools, teachers) are left out of the process, alienated and demotivated. Without their participation, ideas like creativity, individual-centric learning and so on will remain mere rhetoric.

Making exams redundant raises too many questions, the solutions to which must be thought through and processes put in place to address them. What will the role of the teacher be if not as mere facilitator for better marks? How will they get the students genuinely interested in a subject without worrying about scores?

How will they redefine class? What will be the new role of the student? And what about the whole market out there (coaching classes) that caters to this system, in which many teachers have a stake? Resolving these concerns will take time. A policy can, at best, be a starting point. Participative capacity building is the next crucial step.

Source: Mumbai /dnaindia.com/20 August 2010

Expanding India's Expertise

Recently, Sanjaya Baru, the prime minister's former media advisor, sounded the alarm over how many Indian think tanks were now dependent on foreign public and private institutions the World Bank, DFID (UK), Oxfam and many others for financial support. He correctly walked away from the notion that these think tanks were, therefore, "captured" by the foreign institutions.

But a more nuanced worry is in order. Funding does constrain what you will do: this is simply a matter of prudence, not of being "bought". I will give one personal example. I was on the board of an important Indian NGO which deals with trade issues. This NGO was fully sympathetic to myriad writings by me and professors Arvind Panagariya and T N Srinivasan, among others, warning how the demands to include labour standards in trade treaties and institutions were tantamount to "export protectionism" (in the sense of seeking to raise the cost of production abroad to moderate competition). We had forcefully argued that these demands must be rejected as being driven by labour unions in the West, which were wrongly fearful of trade with the developing countries.

Having been funded by foreign agencies which wanted them to work with foreign think tanks, the Indian NGO had organised a seminar on the subject in Washington DC, under joint auspices with Carnegie. It wanted me to play a prominent role, but it had to agree to my being downgraded because Carnegie had embraced the protectionist agenda on labour standards. With foreign funding, both current and prospective, the Indian NGO felt that it had little choice and sought my indulgence. I resigned over the incident from the NGO, only to return later as I saw the difficulty in which foreign funding had placed its able director. He had integrity; he was penitent. But he had to be prudent or his NGO would be financially crippled.

I have also worked with foreign NGOs such as SA8000, which certifies firms for corporate social responsibility (CSR). But the specific choice by SA8000 of what defines CSR is not necessarily what Indian businesses should buy into, especially on demands such as the payment of a "living wage" which are likely to harm, rather than help, the assault on poverty in India. So, one would expect the Indian corporate sector, working with indigenous NGOs (which are usually small and focussed unlike gigantic NGOs like Oxfam which go everywhere like the BP oil spill) and economists, to develop and push labeling that reflect views on CSR that reflect Indian constraints and objectives. But neither the corporate sector nor the government has done this. Meanwhile, do not be deluded that SA8000 has not received US governmental and corporate aid.

I have long argued, therefore, that the Indian government and corporate sector also should support our own NGOs and think tanks which then do not have to be overwhelmed by foreign-headquartered NGOs and foundations which inevitably reflect different perspectives. To win in a duel,

you have to make sure that you do not use a knife against someone armed with a pistol. If the arguments of foreign foundations, think tanks and NGOs, which also have a compliant western press use your Google to see that the New York Times has run only one story, by Celia Dugger when i complained to her, on how labour standards in trade treaties are considered by the developing countries to be a protectionist threat are to be met successfully, we better support our own NGOs and think tanks.

This also means that the government must do more to draw in our NGOs and think tanks when it goes to negotiate at international meetings. Typically, US delegations draw on several stakeholders and informed experts. With rare exceptions, the government of India permits only business institutions like CII and now FICCI, to join it. I was at the famous 1999 Seattle meeting of the WTO that erupted into protests. I was in the streets and in debates at the Town Hall with Ralph Nader and others, and on panels set up by WTO. But i was not consulted once by the official delegation. We typically go handicapped into international negotiations with just our bureaucrats: they are a fine lot but they are not supermen.

Since eminent Indians in many fields are settled abroad, it is good to see that the prime minister has also now started drawing on their talents more formally, strengthening the government's expertise in turn. I and Professor Srinivasan were drawn upon by him in 1993 to write a report on 'India's Reforms: Next Steps' for the finance ministry. This was probably the only major initiative since my being drawn in, when i was working in India, to write a report on India's trade policy and necessary reforms in 1966: a memorable dividend being that I was taken to see the then prime minister, Indira Gandhi, to talk about my report!

Today, the prime minister has set up the Global Advisory Council, drawing on overseas Indians in different fields. Minister Kapil Sibal is also engaged in several commendable steps to strengthen our capabilities in higher education, drawing carefully on possibilities of scholarly collaboration with foreign universities. One can only applaud these initiatives.

Source: /timesofindia/21 August 2010

Fueling youth with quality education

Joint initiatives and strategies by government, industry and academia are needed to graduate students who are career ready.

It is said that India produces over six to eight lakh technical graduates annually. However, research studies show that only 25 per cent of them are career ready and employable by the industry. A vast majority of technical graduates are deficient in communication skills, analytical/problem solving capabilities, learning abilities, process orientation and domain skills. It is, therefore, necessary to find out the main causes for this growing problem of unemployability of our graduate and post-graduate students.

Although we tend to consider higher education system as the main defaulter in churning out unemployable graduates, the traits of employability among the students actually are sown early in the school education stage and are fairly hardened by the time they get into the higher education system. Hence, it is felt necessary that all the stakeholders such as industry, academia, government need to introduce measures to enhance talents at the basic stage in career management so as to ensure that the students have the required skill sets when they complete their graduation. Industry, in collaboration with academic institutions and faculty, has to orient a curriculum that instils the requisite skills in the students.

The lack of effective industry academia interaction has been one of the failings of the Indian knowledge ecosystem. An overwhelming majority of students go into the employment markets armed with only educational qualifications. Ensuring their employment is a responsibility which industry and academia need to address together. This can be done by training faculty to deliver appropriate content in innovative ways since they impact multiple batches of graduating students. Faculty development and training programmes with a module for judging/testing them on their ability to impart the requisite skills become very critical.

Quality consciousness

The government is an important and crucial player in employability. While the government has focused on increasing the quantity of technical graduates in the country, it is time to start focusing on improving the quality of such graduates. One of the important initiatives taken by the government in collaboration with educational institutions is 'finishing schools'. Finishing schools work towards enhancing employability by training graduates on specific skill sets required by industry. In the long term, the finishing school mechanics should be embedded into the curriculum itself and institutions should be measured on how they fare on attributes like employability, besides scholastic achievements.

Active learning

Technical graduates of tomorrow need to rapidly develop and integrate the right way of conceptual and procedural knowledge required to articulate, design, develop and implement solutions to real world challenges. This requires infusing several competencies within subjects.

Autonomous institutions and deemed universities which have academic flexibility in curriculum changes, conducting assessments and evaluations are beginning to align education programmes with future workplace demands. There are many real world engineering practices being considered in today's electives.

Educational institutions see a good reason in having industry electives because it enhances employability and also creates competitiveness among the institutions of excellence.

From the perspective of employability, the gap between learning practices and business expectations in terms of preparing technical students is significant. The resulting educational gaps have important performance related implications both for industry and higher education institutions. One of the solutions appears to be active learning. Active learning shifts the attention from the teacher to the learner. It emphatically subscribes to the idea that learners take equal learning responsibility in the entire learning cycle. Active learning means participating in events which are facilitated rather than taught. Such training involves people's behaviour, as distinct from their capacity to remember.

There is a need that modern day education system recognises and emphasises the importance of innovative and co-operative learning methods like case studies, role-plays, demonstrations, debate and so on in the teaching learning process. Each of these are aimed at encouraging learners to participate in the learning process and go beyond memorising sections of texts. In fact, the stress here is on thinking and implementing rather than rote learning.

There are other entities like assessment agencies, training organisations that facilitate interaction and work towards creating a platform where all stakeholders, including students, can come together and explore opportunities of reducing the gap between the supply and demand of the talent pool. The students through these catalysts can identify their skills and abilities, their strengths and weaknesses and areas of improvement. This feedback then becomes very crucial in assisting them to train themselves on the requisite skills and become career ready.

Source: /deccanherald.com/21 August 2010

Reforming India's Universities

If India is to build a stable liberal democracy, if we are to empower the vast mass of the Indian public, if we want to give ourselves a more equitable and fair society, and if we want sustainable economic growth, then our university system desperately needs to be reformed. The UPA government has understood this. Its plan to massively expand the university system is recognition that the idea of a liberal, empowering, just and sustainable India depends on a vibrant, expanding higher education system.

Critics have argued that quantity will come at the cost of quality. This is correct, but as Kapil Sibal, the minister for human resources development, has recognised, there is simply no alternative. Over the longer term, quality should improve. One way of dealing with the fall in standards is to bring in foreign talent. India's university system is depressingly Indian. You can walk the corridors of academe and not see a single foreign face amongst the faculty. Our university system does not embody universality. Like Indian industry in the 1960s and 1970s, it has shut out foreigners and has suffered as a result.

India's universities need to be made more 'universal' if they are to flourish. The latest ranking of world universities shows that India has a long way to go in higher education. Its once proud university system, the best in Asia after the Second World War, has fallen on very bad times. It is not that Indian university education has languished altogether. The IITs (even though they have a lot to answer for), IIMs and a host of other universities such as Delhi and JNU have brought high quality higher education to India. Nevertheless, relative to the rest of the world, India has fallen behind. It has also fallen behind in terms of India's demographics. Our much-vaunted 'demographic dividend' and 'youth bulge' will turn into a social and political nightmare if we do not expand and improve university education.

Bringing in foreign talent will help our university system. If we look around the world, we will see that no university system of any repute is insular, certainly not as insular as India's. Even China, with its authoritarian political system and its relative lack of English competence, has thousands of foreign faculty.

Historically, there is no major university system that has been self-sufficient. This is particularly true of the American university system which drew and continues to recruit massively from Europe and other continents. A university must be as universal as possible in terms of recruiting talent. Recruitment in India must be opened up not just to NRIs. It must be opened up to everyone Asians, Africans, Arabs, Europeans, Latin and North Americans that has the English language competence to teach in India.

The presence of foreign faculty will not only help bridge the gap in quality teachers. It will also have an impact on Indian colleagues. Good quality teachers from abroad will have a powerful demonstration effect. Indian universities, like Indian schools, suffer from teacher absenteeism, from lack of professionalism in terms of classroom transactions, from a lackadaisical approach to supervision and from abysmal research. Foreign colleagues, just in the normal course of their functioning, will both embarrass and inspire Indian counterparts.

More than any amount of exhortation from the HRD ministry or vice-chancellors or articles in newspapers, it is this that will energise the Indian faculty. Of course, hiring foreigners will cost us money. It will also require adjustment in our horrible visa and residency rules. We could save money by hiring foreigners on a part-time basis, at least in the beginning; see the experience of the Indian School of Business. And surely it is not beyond our home ministry, mad as it is, to amend our approach to visas and residency. India's national interest requires that we find the money and construct an entry system for foreign teachers. Above all, it requires that we change our attitude to the presence of foreign faculty in our universities.

Source: /timesofindia/21 August 2010

Sarkari inanities

The silly and gratuitous controversy about Vishwanathan Anand's nationality tells us a bit about ourselves. Through this looking glass we see what we are and what we have become.

We know the story: The University of Hyderabad decides to confer honorary doctorates to three distinguished people, including a visiting foreign mathematician and Anand. They applied to the President, who is the university's Visitor, through the ministry of human resources development (HRD), which has to clear all such proposals when foreigners are involved. The HRD ministry, under the enlightened Kapil Sibal, who wants to transform the education sector in this country, sat on this proposal for months. They wanted to know if Anand was indeed an Indian or a foreign national, since he lives in Spain. Inquiries were made and Anand's wife faxed a copy of his passport to the ministry which conclusively proved he was indeed an Indian. But by the time all this was processed, it was too late and the university had to cancel the function.

Bureaucratic cussedness and ineptitude is the most obvious conclusion. In a country where the onus of proving everything is on the citizen rather than the establishment, that Aruna Vishwanathan had to fax her husband's passport copies is par for the course. Go to any government office — indeed, go to any private sector institution — and they will tell you to get a copy of this, a copy of that to prove you are who you say you are. Try and open a new bank account or even transfer an old one when you move residence; the procedures will drive you insane.

Nor is the delay big news. The bureaucratic machine works at a sloth's pace, partly because of the lethargy, partly the sheer number of procedures and mostly because no one wants to take a decision, lest it is held against him/her in future.

But here's the question: Why did the university have to take permission anyway? The University of Hyderabad is not a fly by night institution, one of those degree shops going by the name of "deemed universities". It is a place of learning that ought to have the autonomy to decide who it wants to honour. Why take the proverbial "nod" from the government?

Easier said than done. The government may have liberalised the economy but it still retains control over our intellectual life. Governmental interference in the higher education sector has grown over the years and the neta-babu nexus wields enormous clout over the universities. In Mumbai, we recently saw gross shoddiness & involvement of the government in the selection of the new vice-chancellor and the end result was hardly edifying.

An even bigger question is: Even if Vishwanathan Anand did hold a foreign passport, so what? For the past few years, we have gone out of our way to honour the so-called People of Indian Origin (PIO) and the law clearly

allows anyone with a forebear upto three generations ago who was born in India. Thus V.S. Naipual, whose works on India have hardly been complimentary, is much sought after despite the fact that both he and his father were born outside India and he holds a British passport. Why, this year itself the Indian government honoured Sant Chatwal, the controversial American businessman, with a Padma Bhushan; was there a lot of checking and rechecking into his antecedents? And if the government did want to know the facts in the case of Anand, all it had to do was discreetly (and quickly) check its own records and come up with the facts.

It is naive to think that this is only the government's stupidity on show; as a people too we have ambivalent feelings about "foreigners" and especially Indians who have moved abroad. And it shows how meekly we have begun to accept official intrusion into our lives. At a recent media conference the government refused permission to the organisers to allow participants from other South Asian countries — Pakistanis one could understand, but even Sri Lankans were barred. No one wanted to take on the government for this. Keeping a tight hold on education is just another manifestation of this — just ask the researchers who have to go through hoops to get a visa to come to India, especially if they are researching anything "controversial".

Anand is right to feel miffed and disappointed at this and we will understand if he turns down the doctorate. He has been gracious about it by saying he wants to move on. Kapil Sibal too showed grace when he apologised to the player. But if the minister really wants to make a difference, he should begin by loosening universities from the clutches of his ministry. The government has no place in the hallowed portals of learning. It is no use talking about economic growth if our intellectual growth is being stunted and managed by Big Brother. We do not want a society where our incomes are going up and we can buy any gizmo we want while our minds are being told what to think.

Source: Mumbai /asianage.com/26 August 2010

Doctoring doctorates

Kapil Sibal may congratulate himself on managing a 'stalemate' with Viswanathan Anand after the chess champion offered to accept the honorary doctorate even if he had declined earlier. Perhaps it's time now for the minister to think hard about an issue pertaining to higher education. One should not have needed an Anand to set Sibal thinking about doctorates, honorary or otherwise. Anand was not the first to have declined an honorary doctorate. Lalu Prasad did the same in 2004. The point is not about the leader saying no to the degree. It is about Yadav's refusal being an exception. There's a rush of politicians and others to 'earn' an honorary degree. Our centres of higher learning, on their part too, have never fought shy of conferring the coveted doctorates on 'personalities'.

Honorary doctorates can be wrangled from foreign universities as well. Earlier this year, former Karnataka Chief Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy was awarded an honorary degree from the University of Jerusalem, Israel. It was announced that a private trust had 'approached' the University for the Honour. The story was that this was a parity-seeking exercise in response to Chief Minister B.S. Yeddyurappa being awarded an honorary doctorate from a US University.

Indian universities can be influenced more easily than foreign ones. Doctorates are considered the divine right of CMs in a state like Tamil Nadu. Both M. Karunanidhi and J. Jayalalithaa sport their 'academic' prefixes before their names. Outside politics, from Sania Mirza and Yash Chopra to Amritanandamayi Amma and Baba Ramdev, a flurry of honorary doctorates has been given on personalities representing fields ranging from sports and cinema to spirituality. What must strike Sibal, as he reflects on the abundance of honorary doctorates, is the contrasting status of non-celebrity doctorates.

Here are some points for him to ponder over. India is seventh among nations in terms of the total annual volume of research papers submitted for peer review. The country contributes less than 3 per cent to world research. Only 1 per cent of students who complete their undergraduate degrees opt for doctoral studies in India. Thirty-eight per cent of papers produced in India never find a citation elsewhere. Sure, let us honour extra-academic achievers by giving them honorary degrees. But how about getting real doctorates for meaningful research?

Source: New Delhi /hindustantimes.com/26 August 2010

Let vocational education drive India's future

An otherwise mundane conversation about 20 years ago with some rural youth from a remote taluka has remained unforgettable. When asked what they were studying, some of them replied BA with subjects like psychology and sociology. It was as clear as daylight on that dusty, hot afternoon that their future was dark and they were wasting their time.

Their BA might have got them a degree and the "status" of graduates. A job, too, only if they were really lucky. Because their job, most likely, would have come not due to their core education.

This was the same time when school dropouts in the drought-prone Pabal village of Pune district were successfully learning skills to become welders, fabricators and simple scooter, motorcycle and pump-set mechanics. They were part of the novel "Pabal experiment" in vocational education. Without degrees, they seemed better equipped to become self-employed in a rural setting and lead successful lives.

It is a fact that the most basic degrees right up to the doctoral level is worthless in many universities across the country because of the poor quality of education. It is not

for nothing that India has an entire army of the educated unemployed and the unemployable. They are the victims of a system which has forced them to spend their crucial formative years in getting a degree to become graduates.

The "graduate" tag is also important for the middle classes because a young man without it feels inferior to his graduate wife. Even if other eligibility criteria match, prospective alliances fall through because the woman is "over-qualified".

Post-liberalisation, the Indian mindset has begun to change. The hospitality industry is an attractive destination for the youth today and many academically bright youngsters won't mind pursuing a diploma in catering to follow their heart's calling. They will begin their careers in various capacities in hotels, restaurants and resorts and be proud of it. In the past, family and friends would dissuade such career choices and ask, "Why do you want to become a waiter?"

Career opportunities that were non-existent then have become a reality for today's youth. Thus, there are a variety of courses in the animation industry, television production, entertainment industry, event management, food processing, telecom, the retail sector and scores of other areas. The scope has also widened for the truly academically inclined in the pure sciences, humanities or professional degree courses.

Blessed with the power of youth and an economy that continues to grow robustly, India's future lies in unleashing a revolution in vocational education courses. These will equip young men and women with a variety of skills that add value to the economy and not draw from it.

The Maharashtra government's announcement last week to start the nation's first university for vocational courses is, therefore, very encouraging. Union HRD minister Kapil Sibal's efforts to reform the educational system are perhaps the best thing that has happened to India in a long time.

In this age of information technology, knowledge economy and cyber warfare, it is only appropriate that education should get the second highest priority in India after defence. Like China, India needs to start looking inwards, and at least for one five-year plan we need to focus on fixing education. The benefits will be incalculable.

Source: Mumbai /dnaindia.com/30 August 2010

Focus on how a child learns, says Sibal

Democracy starts in a classroom and the focus should be on how a child learns instead of how an institution should teach, said Union Human Resource Development Minister Kapil Sibal on Monday. Sibal was in the city to attend the First Ramrao Adik Oration on 'Education- Challenges and Future,' organised by The Ramrao Adik Charitable Trust, at the Taj Mahal Palace.

"There is no flexibility in the system and knowledge cannot be stratified in three fields —science, commerce and

humanities. We need a multi-disciplinary educational system,” he said. Chief Minister Ashok Chavan, and D.Y. Patil, the Governor of Tripura was also present at the event.

Sibal said the education sector will receive the biggest investments and competition among universities will enhance quality. But the Gross Enrollment Ratio — number of students enrolling into universities, must be increased he said.

India’s current ratio was 12.4 per cent which must increase to 30 per cent by 2020 for which 1,000 additional universities and 45,000 new colleges are needed.

He spoke about the National Accreditation Authority Bill, which will make accreditation compulsory for any upcoming university. He spoke of Education Malpractices Act that will help make the education system transparent.

“The Education Tribunals bill will take care of disputes in the system,” he added. He spoke about the 14 proposed innovation universities and the need to create intangible wealth for the nation’s progress.

Source: Mumbai /hindustantimes.com/31 August 2010

India’s proposed reforms: Somewhat half-baked

From Thiruvananthapuram, the capital of Kerala, the government’s higher education reform proposals look a bit different than in glitzy New Delhi. Kerala ruled now by mild-mannered Communists, who have had power here off and on for the past half-century, is less market-oriented and commercialised than up north. The State has universal literacy, a lack of visible poverty in striking contrast to much of the recent of India, and a higher education access rate of about 18 per cent —double the national average. Kerala’s main export is its people, many well educated, who work all over the world, but particularly in the Gulf countries. A quarter of the State’s income consists of remittances from these workers.

A conference devoted to a discussion of the reform measures soon to go before Parliament with a strong likelihood of passing, was unsurprisingly critical of most of them. The overriding criticism was of the underlying commitment in the reforms to linking Indian higher education to global trends of commercialising higher education and uncritically linking India to the global knowledge economy. The spearhead of the internationalisation is the bill to open India’s higher education system to foreign institutions. The proposals were criticised for uncritical acceptance of yet to be determined foreign institutions and initiatives, unrealistic expectations that foreign institutions will provide significant access and new ideas for India’s admittedly moribund academic system. Some see the proposals as a kind of “new neocolonialism.”

Criticism

While the foreign providers’ proposals have received the most international coverage, they are only a small part of a large package of changes. There was wide criticism of “dictation from Delhi” and the over centralisation of a higher education system that has traditionally had a great deal of autonomy for the States — as stipulated in India’s Constitution. A proposal to set up a powerful self-perpetuating panel to rule on a range of higher education issues came in for criticisms, as did a bill that would set up tribunals to adjudicate problems in the system.

Accreditation has long been a problem for India. The agency set up several decades ago has only accredited a small proportion of India’s universities and colleges. The reforms propose a new mechanism and dismantled the old one, but are not very clear about exactly how the new arrangements will work. The reform proposals recognise that Indian higher education suffers from significant corruption, and proposes new mechanisms to prevent it. Several of the existing key agencies that have controlled higher education nationally, such as the University Grants Commission and the All-India Council for Technical Education, have uncertain futures.

The critics pointed to problem after problem in the actual legislation. Unclear wording, incomplete plans for specific agencies, unrealistic expectations for proposed committees, and other lapses.

For this observer, it did seem that the legislation, at the very least, needs some significant tweaking if it is to have a good chance of success even on its own terms.

Where are the personnel?

Additional proposals not specifically tied to the legislation also seem rather unrealistic. The Minister of Human Resource Development, Kapil Sibal, who is a powerhouse of ideas and proposals, has by fiat set up at least one central government university in each of India’s States. He has expanded the number of Indian Institutes of Technology and Indian Institutes of Management, crown jewels in India’s postsecondary system, and promised a dozen or more “world class research universities” in a short period of time. The problems with all of the proposals are manifold. Perhaps the most important one is personnel — there are simply not enough high quality academics to take up jobs in these new institutions. Indeed, the existing IITs are facing serious staffing problems as many academics are reaching retirement age. Further, the amounts of new funding being made available for these initiatives is completely inadequate.

Viewed from down south, the flaws in India’s grand plans seem rather clear. Perhaps the Delhi power elite thinks that change can come on the cheap with somewhat half-baked plans. Perhaps they just want to get the country’s higher education system out of its lethargy. The current set of plans, like many of the ill-fated reform proposals of the past, does little to change India’s 20,000 undergraduate colleges, currently steeped in bureaucracy and outmoded teaching methods, and little to change the countries 400 plus

universities. Without grappling with them, reform will in any case be very incomplete. It is all daunting — perhaps “mission impossible.”

Source: Thiruvananthapuram /thehindu.com/31 August 2010

Haryana aims to be education hub: Bhupinder Singh Hooda

Haryana aims to become a hub for education in the coming years with the state government primarily focusing on providing quality and need based education, chief minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda said today.

"We have brought qualitative changes in the system from primary to higher education in our state. In the coming five to seven years, you will see Haryana becoming an education hub of the country," he said at a press conference in New Delhi.

There are now 78 government colleges in different parts of Haryana and about 3 lakh students are getting education in various streams, he said, adding India's first defence university is set to open in Gurgaon.

Apart from this, four private universities including OP Jindal Global University in Sonapat, five deemed universities including Maharishi Markeshwar University and some 96 private aided colleges are running in the state, he said.

"National Institute of Design, which is in Ahmedabad, is also coming to open its branch in the state. Location is being identified for setting up the institute," he said.

Speaking about the state's economic growth, Hooda said "We had a total industrial investment of Rs 40,000 crore up to March since 1966. Now, it is Rs 53,000 crore on ground and (industrial) investment of over Rs one lakh crore is in the pipeline."

Till 2005, the FDI in the state was Rs 3,500 crore and now it is Rs 9,277 crore, which is almost three times. The per-capital income in the state has reached Rs 77,871 at the rate of current price, he added.

Source: New Delhi /dnaindia.com/31 August 2010

Choose the right MBA programme

When students opt for higher education in management, they need to make two major decisions – which kind of course and at which college? Shiva Krishnan shares some pointers

As a sector matures, it tries to come up with innovative products to capture an untapped market. This phenomenon is evident in the Education sector, especially with respect to management education in India. Over the years, due to the demand from the student community, a number of new colleges have started offering diverse MBA programmes. A student today therefore has numerous options if he/ she is considering management education.

Traditional MBA courses are of two-year duration. At the end of the first year, which consists of general business subjects, students usually get an opportunity to intern with companies to gain some experience. The second year covers subjects related to specialisation. This model of management education is widely followed all over the world.

Students without much work experience are well suited for this kind of an MBA programme. The internship and the duration of the programme provide students an opportunity to change their work domains.

One-year MBA: Many work-ing professionals who want to do an MBA are not willing to take two years off from work, owing to several reasons, including the loss of salary for that period. One-year MBA programmes target those who typically have at least two or three years of work experience. The programmes are rigorous and do not include internships or breaks.

One-year MBA courses save time, and candidates can get back to their earning ways in a year's time. This kind of MBA is ideal for those who are looking for career progression in the same or similar work domain. Radical domain shifts are tougher to achieve although not impossible.

Many well-known colleges in India, including the IIMs, offer one-year MBA programmes.

Part-time MBA: Many work-ing professionals do not want to quit their jobs to study further. In order to cater to such students, many B-Schools have come up with part-time MBA programmes.

These programmes run on weekends and usually take longer to complete than the traditional MBA programmes.

There are diverse views about the effectiveness of a part-time MBA course and learning management through distance education. Many critics feel that such courses are not effective and the learning is not very good.

Executive MBA: These classes usually have professionals with considerable work experience — seven years or more. Many of those who take up an Executive MBA course are sponsored by their companies. The course usually consists of a minimum number of contact hours in a year and a lot of offline learning. Some colleges also conduct classes over the weekends and in the evenings.

Specialised MBA: A new trend that is catching up in India is specialisation in a niche area of management studies. Apart from the regular specialisations in management, finance, human resources or operations, MBA programmes are available in insurance, retail management, mass communication, pharmaceuticals etc.

However, these specialised MBA programmes restrict the students to a particular domain.

Others: Other options include MBA through distance education. With the advent of the internet, delivering courses online is now commonplace. There are also the

traditional distance education programmes offered by many universities.

However, this mode of education is not recommended for management students.

College selection

About 20 years ago, an MBA course in India was synonymous with the IIMs. Though the IIMs continue to be the leaders in business education in India, several good B-Schools have emerged over the last few years with innovative courses to satisfy the needs of all sections of students. How do we differentiate between these colleges? Here are some tips that you can follow:

Reputation: Some colleges already have a very good brand value and are very well recognised in the industry. The brand value of the college adds value to the student's profile. If it is a new or upcoming college, then it is advisable to consult with somebody in the industry – for example, your HR department – to understand the industry perception of the college.

Online information: Start finding information through online sources. Every college has a website. Go through the website and find out details about the college history, staff details — permanent staff and visiting staff, infrastructure, course contents etc. All B-School students blog about their college experience, and such blogs are a very good source of information. Every college has a presence on social media sites such as Facebook, Orkut and Twitter. Follow the college and get details of its activities, guest lectures, placement record etc.

Talk to students/ alumni: Perhaps the best way to collect information would be to talk to the current students and the alumni. Try and get your doubts cleared about the quality of education offered and the facilities available.

Accreditation: Does the college have the requisite approvals? Is it AICTE- approved? What other collaborations does the college have? These approvals and collaborations are important. If the college is not approved, then your degree certificate might not hold much value. AICTE approval is mandatory for loans from public sector banks and to seek jobs in public sector units.

B-School rankings: Many magazines, websites and newspapers come out with B-School rankings. Although these rankings are not very reliable, they give some idea about the relative merit of the college. Do not blindly believe the rankings. In fact, the rankings of a college usually vary across different surveys. Coaching classes are another reference point to get more information on B-Schools.

Placement statistics: One of the primary aims of enrolling for a management degree is to get a good job at the end of the course. Most students carefully study the official placement report of the college. When looking at the placement statistics try and find out the job profiles offered. Try to get information about the alumni of the

college and how well they are doing. If you are interested in some particular company/ sector, check if such companies visit the college for placement.

Campus visit: Visit the campus, if possible, to find out more about the infrastructure. Some colleges even allow prospective students to attend a lecture or two to experience the teaching methodology. A recent trend is to start MBA courses in engineering colleges. These institutions use the available infrastructure for running their MBA courses. An MBA degree from a well-established college with a dedicated campus and very good infrastructure adds a lot of value to your profile. Campus visits give you a fair idea about the college culture, facilities and students.

Staff: One of the major assets of any college is its staff. Qualified and experienced faculty forms the backbone of any successful management programme.

All colleges have a mix of permanent and visiting faculty. Details of the faculty are usually found on the college website. A healthy mix of people with some industry exposure is preferred. This brings in insights from the industry and academics to the classroom. In an era where almost all colleges have good infrastructure, the faculty play the role of the key differentiator.

Student mix: Data about the current students is usually available on the college website. Data such as the average CAT/GMAT scores, average age, average work experience and male-female ratio gives you a fair idea of the student mix of the college.

Ask yourself if you will fit into a similar student mix. For example, a prospective student might have 3 years of work experience, but the college may consist of 90 per cent students who have no work experience. In such a situation do you see the peer group as a value addition?

This might also matter during placements as all companies that recruit freshers do not always recruit people with work experience.

The average entrance test marks can give you a rough indication of the student quality.

Source: /deccanherald.com/

RESOURCE

India at 78th spot on Newsweek's best country list

India ranks 78th on the World's Best Countries' list compiled by Newsweek magazine, which placed nations on the basis of health, education, economy and politics.

Among India's neighbours, China is ranked 59th, Sri Lanka is placed at 66th position, while Bangladesh and Pakistan has been placed at 88th and 89th spots respectively. Japan, South Korea and Singapore are the only three Asian countries in the top 20.

The top four positions go to Finland, Switzerland, Sweden and Australia while the United States comes in at 11th with Germany at 12th and the United Kingdom at 14th.

"In Newsweek's first-ever Best Countries special issue, we set out to answer a question that is at once simple and incredibly complex--if you were born today, which country would provide you the very best opportunity to live a healthy, safe, reasonably prosperous and upwardly mobile life?," writes Rana Foorohar, deputy editor.

The rankings are based on performance in areas such as education, health, economic dynamism and quality of life.

India is described as a big country with 1.2 billion people with a small per capita income of USD 1,170 per capita.

In an article describing how the countries were ranked, Foorohar writes, "While remarkable individuals can be found in any nation on earth, certain countries give their citizens much greater opportunity to succeed than others at certain points in time."

"As wealth and power shift from West to East, and a new post-crisis world order continues to take shape, it's no longer clear that being born and raised in Omaha offers quite the edge that it once might have," she added.

India gets 2.5 for freedom of expression, political participation and electoral processes from Freedom House with 1 being the highest score. Pakistan scores low with 4.5.

In the quality of life section, the study quotes the World Bank statistics as 75 per cent of the population living on less than USD 2 per day.

In the 'ease of doing' business category, India gets 133th rank, according to World Bank, which puts 1 as the best place to do business.

Source: New York /timesofindia/ 22 August 2010

Farewell, state

Once upon a time in Mumbai, or Bombay as it was then called, a group of seven farsighted industrialists and an economist met to draft a blueprint for India's economic development. The year was 1944, three years before the British actually quit. The document would later become famous as the 'Bombay Plan'. Under Jawaharlal Nehru's stewardship, India's economic policy was largely derived from this document. The Bombay Plan called for an actively interventionist state policy in order to achieve two primary objectives: doubling agricultural production and increasing industrial output five-fold.

This was to be achieved by the government of newly independent India by investing Rs 100 billion over the next 15 years. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, who was a student of economics at the time, described other important features of the Bombay Plan at an event to mark its 60th anniversary: "The Bombay Plan laid great emphasis on public investment in the social and economic infrastructure, in both rural and urban areas; it emphasised

the importance of agrarian reform and agricultural research, in setting up educational institutions and a modern financial system. Above all, it defined the framework for India's transition from agrarian feudalism to industrial capitalism, but capitalism that is humane, that invests in the welfare and skills of the working people." As this peek at India's economic history shows, public investment in social infrastructure has always remained a primary objective — at least on paper.

Even when Manmohan Singh, as finance minister, was dismantling Nehru's legacy and opening India's doors to the world and embracing liberalisation, he stressed on the continuing need for government to spend on sectors like education and health. "A vast number of people in our country live on the edges of a subsistence economy," he said in his Budget speech in July 1991. "We need credible programmes of direct government intervention focusing on the needs of these people. We have the responsibility to provide them with quality social services such as education, health, safe drinking water and roads."

The reality, though, is different. Successive governments at the Centre have surreptitiously been pruning public investment in a clutch of crucial sectors while maintaining the usual rhetoric about "wiping every tear from every eye".

Recent high-visibility programmes launched by the UPA government seem to have hiked spending on social sectors such as education, health and sanitation. There also appears to be an increase in spending on economic services like agriculture, rural development (which includes the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme), energy and transport. However, as a proportion of the GDP, central government expenditure on social and economic services has suffered a certain decline since 1992, the beginning of the 8th Plan, when expenditure on these was 7.3 per cent of GDP. It soon declined to 7.1 per cent in the 9th Plan (1997-2002) and further to 7.009 per cent during the 10th Plan (2002-07).

This is spending by just the central government. Total public investment derives from both the central and the state governments. If one looks at combined expenditures, public investment in health and education has virtually stagnated — if taken as a share of total expenditure or of GDP — even though the absolute amount being spent is increasing. As a share of GDP, the combined expenditure on education and health was 4.3 per cent in 1990-91 and 4.28 per cent in 2007-08. Why is this significant?

Till the slowdown in the Indian economy last year as a result of recession in the advanced countries, India had exhibited dramatically high growth rates of GDP. The peculiar nature of this growth was that it was highly concentrated among high income groups and corporates, says Surajit Mazumdar, professor at the Institute for Studies in Industrial Development, a New Delhi-based think tank. This led to increasing revenues for government — tax receipts increased from about 15 per cent of GDP in 2002-

03 to 18 per cent in 2007-08. In short, government had much more money at its disposal for spending.

"Since 2004, the government faced a special situation in which it was possible for it to somewhat increase its expenditures in areas that had been neglected for a long time without coming into conflict with the objectives of keeping taxes low as well as controlling the fiscal deficit. Expenditure growth could, in such circumstances, be allowed to keep pace with high GDP growth without increasing the public expenditure to GDP ratio. This is precisely what happened till the global crisis disrupted the situation — with the deficit having now increased, the familiar old story of the need to rein in government expenditure is back," explains Mazumdar.

In other words, so long as the country saw high GDP growth and the government was flush with funds, expenditure rose — albeit marginally, by only that tiny bit more to keep pace with the increase in GDP. In actual terms, there has been no real swing away from the policy of keeping public expenditure low. The proportions are virtually the same as earlier, showing minor increases.

The result of this tight-fisted policy shows up all around, but it's most sharply visible in the standards of living of the bulk of India's population. In a majority of sectors that affect the common man directly — like education, health, agriculture, nutrition, housing, roads and transport — there is increasing disarray and shortage caused by insufficient investment. Simultaneously, there is a rise in private expenditure on heads such as education and health. As per the National Account Statistics, private final consumption expenditure on education and health increased from 2.79 per cent to 4.55 per cent of GDP between 1990-91 and 2007-08.

While the government has tried to introduce the so-called 'public-private-partnership' (PPP) model in many of these sectors in an attempt to woo private investment, the results are a uniform deterioration of services and facilities. PPP has also been tried in building roads and highways with disastrous results. Over half of the country's vast road network lies unmetalled because of lack of investment. Private investors are not interested as there are no returns here.

In many areas, like in housing, a piecemeal or creeping privatisation has taken place de facto, with government agencies becoming mere brokers. Take the Delhi Development Authority (DDA). Even as the capital faces a housing shortage of over 1.2 million units, Delhi's largest landowner has transformed itself into the biggest land broker. In 2006-07, it spent just 1 per cent of its total expenditure on building flats and shops. On the other hand, it derived 18 per cent of its huge income from land deals and 32 per cent from investment of its reserve fund.

According to estimates by the Planning Commission, there is a housing shortage of nearly 25 million units in urban India, requiring about Rs 3.61 lakh crore in investment. Since 99 per cent of this shortage is in the economically

weaker sections (EWS) category, there is virtually no possibility of self-financing. Only an active government policy of providing affordable housing can mitigate this situation.

Neglect of sectors like education and health, in the fond hope that the private sector will step into the breach, is a very short sighted policy. In all advanced countries, the basis of prosperity was laid by first ensuring that citizens got their basic rights — health, social security, education, care of the elderly. Even today, most advanced democracies spend a huge amount, and a considerable portion of their GDP, on these sectors.

According to the latest (2009) data from 26 countries of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the average net social expenditure by governments (on health, education, social security, etc) is 25 per cent of the net national income. The range was from 9 per cent in Korea to 33 per cent in Germany and 35 per cent in France. Comparing India with the OECD may seem unfair, but what do we make of the fact that even Sri Lanka and Bangladesh spend a larger proportion of their budgets on health, for instance, than we do? Clearly, there is an urgent need to increase public spending on the social sector to ensure basic human dignity.

Source: /timesofindia/

Contribute

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

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

Please email your contributions to aserf@apeejay.edu

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