

Newspaper Clips

February 27, 2011

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US assures India on TVU students

Washington: The US has assured India that hundreds of Indian students affected by the closure of a California-based "sham" university would be given "fair and appropriate" treatment and their interests would be carefully considered.

The assurance by secretary of state Hillary Clinton came in the form of a letter to Indian ambassador to the US, Meera Shankar.

"In the letter, Clinton emphasized that the US is proud to host over 100,000 Indian students and hopes to increase the numbers in the years ahead," Shankar told reporters.

Nearly 1,500 Indian students were affected by the closure of Tri Valley University. ■■

Times of India ND 27/02/2011 P-23

Maximum India unleashes its soft power on US

Chidanand Rajghatta | TNN

Washington: Some of Washington DCs cognoscenti still remember Bundu Khan Langa. With his brilliant smile and colorful safa, the oversized Rajasthani turban, the young folk singer would send titters through the audience, exhorting them to "shiiitt downshiiitt down," so he could start his performance.

Once he began, the crowd on the grassy mall in front of the Capitol would end up spellbound, hushed by the soulful melodies that essayed from then 14-year old genius.

It was an event that made Langas and Manganiars, the Rajasthani desert singers, famous, and unleashed the cultural strength and variety of India on the US and the world five years before the term "soft power" was coined by Harvard Universitys Joseph Nye.

Some 25 years after the great Smithsonian Institutions Festival of India, it is now the turn of Washingtons other grand cultural establishment, the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, to host an India festival at a time the country and its cultural muscle and depth hardly needs any introduction.

Maximum India, a 20-day cultural extravaganza of Indian soft power, kicks off here on March 1 with scores

Maximum India, a 20-day cultural extravaganza of Indian soft power, kicks off here on March 1 with scores of artistes set to enthrall Washington

of artistes set to enthrall a capital where India is now looked on more favorably than ever before.

A recent Gallup Poll put India among Canada, Britain, Japan and ahead of China, and even Israel — as countries rated favorably by Americans. Indias strategic partnership with the US has much to do with it, but underpinning that is a cultural bonding that has come a long way since 1985 when America got a sustained taste of India.

In recent years, Kennedy Center has hosted a China Festival, an African Odyssey and an Arabian extravaganza even as memories of the great Festival of India had begun to fade. Fortunately, New Delhi responded with alacrity to Kennedy Center's initiative to drum up the India beat again. The result is a fiesta that will be brighten up Washington DC's cultural calendar in the fading days of winter.

381 get PhDs at DU convocation

139 Medals Awarded, Over 400 Parents Watch Webcast Of Event

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Delhi University awarded 381 PhDs and 139 medals to meritorious students in its 88th convocation held on Saturday. It was also the first for professor Dinesh Singh as the vice-chancellor of the university. Union minister for human resource development and telecom, Kapil Sibal, delivered the convocation address as the chief guest and urged those passing out of DU to work hard while keeping their ethics and values intact.

"Today commercialization of our education has not only shadowed ethics and moral values, lowered standards but it has also generated a plethora of problems which with the passage of time will hollow our system of education. Ironically the purpose of education has generally been reduced to merely acquiring a certificate or a degree which can help a person in getting a job with



MEETING OF MINDS: HRD minister Kapil Sibal (L) and Delhi University vice-chancellor Dinesh Singh at the 88th annual convocation of the university in New Delhi on Saturday

high income. The rush for short cuts to achieve economic prosperity has pushed moral values into the background," Sibal said.

He added education has become so commercialized that seats in many private institutions and colleges are literally for sale. "We have witnessed in recent times the fall of once

large and proud international and national corporations, well-known personalities, politicians and sportspersons, due to their greed," Sibal said.

This time, more than 400 parents accompanying the graduates were seated separately in the university's conference centre from where they watched the live webcast of the

proceedings in the Convention Hall of Vice Regal Lodge. Rakhi Chandela, who pursued BSc life sciences from Maitreyi College, received the vice-chancellor's gold medal while Divya Chauhan, who has completed MSc statistics from Hindu College, received five medals. Hindu College students led the pack with a total of 19 medals.

Times of India ND 27/02/2011 P-23

Google tweaks search to weed out drivel

Claire Cain Miller

In a tacit admission that web publishers are flooding its search engine with low-quality pages, Google has revised its methods to improve the usefulness of its results.

Google said the change would raise the rankings of high-quality websites and reduce those of lesser sites, affecting 12% of search queries. Sites known as content farms, which churn out sometimes mindless articles based on what people are searching for, have recently worked their

way to the top of search results, frustrating some Google users. High rankings in search results are crucial because they allow Web sites to get more traffic and bring in more business, either through sales of goods and services or through advertising. "I haven't seen as much negative attention on Google's results as I have in the last month or two — it's been fairly unprecedented," said Danny Sullivan, editor of search engine land and an industry expert.

Persuading users that it has the best results is crucial for



WINDOW TO THE WORLD: Change would raise rankings of high-quality websites and reduce those of lesser sites

Google, whose reputation and status as the front door to the Web depend on them. Though there were many search engines before Google, it became

the dominant player because its technology produced better results for users. If people begin to doubt the quality of its results, Google risks losing them to competitors.

While so-called content farms can provide useful information, many of their articles are of questionable value but achieve high rankings in searches. For example, an eHow article on making friends in college includes tips like "consider joining a sorority or fraternity" and "remember to have a good time, smile and laugh." NYT NEWS SERVICE

Asian Age ND 27/02/2011
P-1(DelhiSpecial)

DU convocation

Improve image of nation: Sibal

AGE CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

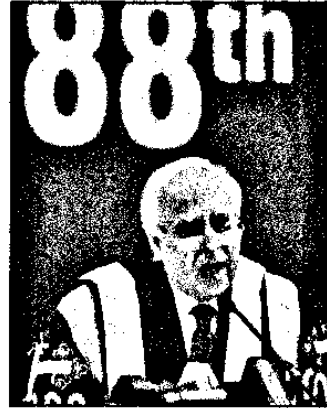
Feb. 26: Union human resource development minister Kapil Sibal expressed his concern over the maddening commercialisation which is fast sapping the moral values out of our education system. Addressing the 88th annual convocation of Delhi University here on Saturday, Mr Sibal exhorted the students to be educated in the true sense and not aim at merely earning degrees.

"The commercialisation of education has shadowed ethics and moral values and hollowed our education system. Ironically, the purpose of education has been reduced to merely acquiring a degree. Education has become a highly remunerative business and it thrives on raising the income expectations of students," he said.

"The greatest education is not only what you have learnt here, but in knowing how to learn. The degrees will help you to make a living but it is your education that will help you to find a life".

Mr Sibal asserted that the youth can change the image of the country from a nation of holidays to one of people who enjoy work.

"We need to become a nation of hard workers... Hard work not resources helped Japan rise up after the devastation of World War II. We need to change the perception of India being a nation of holidays to one of people who enjoy



Union HRD minister Kapil Sibal addresses students at the convocation on Saturday.

PHOTO: PTI

work," Mr Sibal said.

"The Indian economy is booming. India has the most favourable growth path with 50 per cent of the population below the median age of 25. The world has shrunk like never before and knowledge has acquired a new significance and intellectual capital has become the prime mover of organisations and nations," he said.

Defending the government functioning, he said that the system works in a transparent manner, while critics may argue that we are most corrupt and irresponsible.

The function was presided over by vice-chancellor Prof. Dinesh Singh. Over 190 students were conferred medals and prizes.

Over 384 Ph.D. degrees were given away on the occasion. The undergraduate and graduate degrees were conferred in absentia.

Pioneer ND 27/02/2011 p-5

Beware of commercialisation of education: Sibal

381 students
awarded degrees at
DU convocation

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Union HRD Minister Kapil Sibal on Saturday said that young Indians should be on guard against the negative fall-outs of commercialisation of education that was pushing moral values to the background. Addressing the annual convocation of Delhi University, Sibal also asked the students to become the 'agents of change'.

"Education has become commercialised to such an extent that seats in many private colleges are virtually put up for sale; the students have failed to understand the real value of education."

Sibal said that never before was a time when things were so good, it is also a time of the most favourable demographic condition as greater than 50 per cent of our population is below 25 years of age. Sibal spoke after Vice-Chancellor Professor Dinesh Singh awarded doctorate degrees to 381 candidates from various disciplines includ-



Union HRD Minister Kapil Sibal presents a certificate in presence of Vice-Chancellor of Delhi University Dinesh Singh, Pro VC Vivek Suneja, Dean of Colleges Sudhish Pachauri at the 88th Convocation of university in New Delhi on Saturday
Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer

ing Humanities, Science, Medicine, Social Sciences, among others.

"Students need to understand the real value of education over and above its commercial value. Degrees will help you in getting a job but education will help you in leading a good life. This is a time when the country is fac-

ing turmoil and inequities, the challenges seem insurmountable. But with good education and good values, we can overcome that," Sibal, who was the chief guest of the occasion, said. The gold medals were awarded to the university toppers at the graduate and post-graduate level. Sibal said, "We need to become a nation of hard work-

ers. Hard work not resources helped Japan rise up after the devastation of World War II."

Once again proving that girls are not only at par, but are even ahead of their counterparts in academics, the ambitious and competitive young women bagged more gold medals than the boys at the 88th Annual Convocation Ceremony of

Delhi University on Saturday. Of the total 188 awards including 139 medals and 49 prizes awarded to students at the ceremony, more than 120 awards went to the women students of the university.

Divya Chauhan who won five gold medals stood out from the rest. Divya said that the inspiration and driving force behind her achievement was the desire to fulfill her father's wish of her becoming a top officer. Having an impeccable academic career so far, she has always been amongst the top layer of students throughout her school and college days. Divya completed her graduation from Kirori Mal College in Science stream and is also a guest faculty at the Hindu College currently. Divya recently sat for an entrance test for Indian Statistical Studies and disclosing her future plans said, "It is very essential to perform consistently throughout the year. This is my success mantra. I just want to live my father's dream now."

Pro Vice-Chancellor Vivek Suneja, Dean of Colleges Sudhish Pachauri, Director South Campus Umesh Rai and Dean of Students Welfare SK Vij were also present at the ceremony.



Easy wheels

An affordable electric wheelchair will soon be available in India for people with disabilities

SHREYA SAREEN

AN ELECTRIC wheelchair that's made in India and is affordable is an idea whose time is nearing. An ongoing project at the Indian Spinal Injuries will soon be ready with such wheelchairs.

Head of Department of Assistive Technology at the Indian Spinal Injuries Centre (ISIC) Nekram Upadhyay, who has been working on it, says, "The project is in its final stages. We have tied up with the University of Pittsburgh."

A successful trial has already been held in India. "So now, on the basis of technology transfer from the US and their approval, it will be finally tested. Then, with the help of a manufacturer, we'll market it," says 34-year-old Upadhyay, who is also a rehabilitation engineering technologist and has been heading the Assistive Technology

But I couldn't find many options in India," he says.

Things looked up for him when he got a Ford Foundation scholarship and went to the University of Illinois in 2004 to pursue a post-graduate degree in rehabilitation engineering and assistive technology. "While doing my research thesis there, I discussed with my advisor how there were no departments for such fields in India and he advised me to send a proposal to the ISIC. Luckily, they accepted it and gave me the freedom and space to build my own department here," he says.

His task involves counselling patients and providing wheelchairs — manual and automatic — and other customised devices to enable them to perform their tasks. He also provides specialised computer equipment and software, such as adaptive keyboards and monitors.

"There is no such wheelchair available in India yet. The electric ones are imported from abroad and are available Rs 1,00,000 onwards, which is unaffordable for a lot of people"

Department since its inception in 2006.

The wheelchair, which will cost Rs 30,000, is designed in such a way that it can be used in rugged terrains and in rural areas as well.

"There is no such wheelchair available in India yet.

The electric ones are imported from abroad and they are available Rs 1,00,000 onwards, which becomes unaffordable for a lot of people," says Upadhyay.

Upadhyay, along with a team, is involved in designing assistive devices for people who are affected by spinal cord injury to help them become independent.

Upadhyay belongs to Jaipur, and studied Product Design from Rajasthan University. "After that, I worked from 1999-2003 at an NGO — the Indian Council of Social Welfare — where I was an accessibility expert. I used to work there for the disabled and it was then that I decided I wanted to explore this field, and started looking for professional courses in this area.

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BHUBANESWAR IIT DIRECTOR UNDER SCAM SCANNER

Charu Sudan Kasturi

■ charu.kasturi@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: The director of the Indian Institute of Technology Bhubaneswar is drawing on medical facilities from both his IIT and from IIT Kharagpur where he was deputy director till 2009, drawing allegations of misusing public resources.

IIT Bhubaneswar director Madhusudhan Chakraborty is arguing that he has not violated any norms, but top government officials told HT his claims were incorrect.

A senior professor at the Netaji Subhash Institute of Technology (NSIT) in Delhi has complained to B Muthuraman, the chairman, board of governors of IIT Kharagpur against Chakraborty for using IIT Kharagpur resources while heading IIT Bhubaneswar.

Documents sent with the complaint to Muthuraman show Chakraborty seeking specific medicines from IIT Kharagpur in his capacity as Director, IIT Bhubaneswar.

Chakraborty said he was drawing on medicines and consultation from IIT Kharagpur since "they know my medical history and are the best judge for medication administration."

The IIT director argued that he also needed to use medicines facilities at IIT Bhubaneswar in emergencies when consultants were unavailable at IIT Kharagpur. Chakraborty claimed he was entitled to use medical facilities from both institutes. But top officials at the HRD ministry questioned his claim, dismissing his argument that an official can draw benefits from two institutions.

Pioneer Lucknow 24.02.11 p-15

IIT-K bid to ensure healthy indoor environment

Lucknow: Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur (IIT-K) is engaged in developing a technology to be used in formulating a device to clear indoor air pollution. The premier engineering institute aims at ensuring healthy indoor environment at economical rates.

Talking to *The Pioneer*, Head of the Centre for Science and Technology, IIT, Prof Mukesh Sharma said that most of the devices available at present to clean the air did not remove all pollutants. "Our focus is on to remove more carcinogenic pollutants that cause breathing problems. Once the technology is developed, we would like to produce it in a device form," said Sharma, who was in the city to deliver keynote address at a national conference at Isabella Thoburn (IT) College on Wednesday. Talking about the surveyed data of selected cities and villages of Kanpur city, Sharma revealed it had surfaced that urban slum areas were more polluted than villages.

"More so, the indoor air in villages is more polluted than the air outside. The reason for this could be that food is still cooked on chulhas," Sharma said.

PNS

TARDY IMPLEMENTATION OF UPA GOVT'S CHILD CARE LEAVE SCHEME

DU authorities accused of gender bias

kriti nath jha

NEW DELHI, 26 FEB: Delhi University authorities have been accused of gender bias because of the allegedly tardy implementation of the child care leave (CCL) scheme introduced a few years ago.

The UPA government's CCL scheme allows women employees in all its departments to avail of up to two years paid leave for looking after two children till the age of 18 on the basis of Pay Commission recommendation. The University Grants Commission (UGC) followed suit, directing universities to implement the CCL scheme in letter and spirit immediately.

However, Delhi University (DU) appears to be scuttling this provision of offering two years paid leave to female teachers in various colleges and university departments. Colleges were asked to ap-

point substitute teachers in place of teachers whose CCL had been granted for the specified period but there is a reluctance by the authorities to do so.

The UGC regulations on service conditions dated 30 June 2010 provide for replacement by part time/guest teachers against women teachers taking CCL for a period beyond 45 days.

"But it is disturbing that the DU administration (through a letter by assistant registrar, establishment) had issued a communication dated 17/19 January, 2011 in violation of the UGC regulations, denying any replacement by part-time/guest teachers," said the president of Delhi University Teachers Association (DUTA), Prof Aditya Narayan Mishra.

The said letter to the head of the department of mathematics from the assistant registrar asked him to look into specific recommendations in order to consider the request for CCL by Dr Anupama Pani-

grahi, assistant professor in the same department. "The teaching work of the department would not suffer during the period of leave and no substitute would be appointed/ provided against the CCL," read the letter. Prof Mishra maintained that a notification had already been issued on 15 January 2009 for compliance with the CCL scheme so there was no need for a fresh notification.

The DU registrar, Mr R K Sinha, said the university is not concerned with implementation of the provisions of CCL and set guidelines in this regard. "It depends on various colleges and university departments to grant the CCL to female teachers and appoint their substitutes or guest teachers," Mr Sinha said.

Provision of CCL seems to exist only on paper. According to sources, colleges are making a mockery of implementation of CCL. "Many women

teachers were denied leave as their work could not be distributed among colleagues and the colleges expressed helplessness in getting guest teachers," said a DU insider.

"In fact, colleges and university departments show little or no interest in appointing substitutes for teachers seeking CCL. It is nothing but gender bias against close to half the teaching force in the DU. Only colleges like St Stephen's, Hansraj and Sri Venkateswara are appointing guest teachers," added sources.

"We have appointed a guest teacher for one teacher who availed CCL a few months back. There is absolutely no problem of implementation of this special leave facility in our college," said the principal of St Stephen's college, Dr Valsan Thampu.

The UGC chairman, Prof S K Thorat, was unavailable for comment.

from the discomfort
ZONE
Shombit Sengupta



Globalise your business with a perceived core

MY HUMAN Resources Manager says, recruitment at MBA schools exasperates him. When he asks students if Bata can make jam, they smugly reply, "Of course! If a cigarette company can make food to cosmetics to *agarbatti*, why not a shoemaker?" It's scary how Indian business schools are adulterating the marketing courses they have copied from the West. Our License Raj heritage of unsynchronised additions to the conglomerate seems embedded in India's business practice. Do such organisations understand what their perceived business core is?

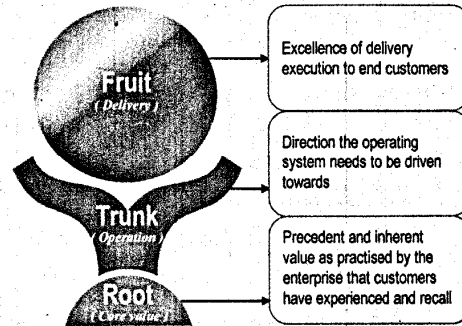
Root, trunk and fruit analogy: This is a device I've defined since 1994 on how an organisation can grow sustainably with high topline and bottomline. Every corporation, like every tree, has to have its root and trunk aligned to sustainably produce healthy fruits. This alignment meets the end-customer's needs and desires in the phenomenally competitive environment. In analogy, the root is the perceived core with precedent and inherent value as practised by the enterprise that its end-customers experience and recall. The trunk is the direction its operating systems need to be driven towards; the fruit is excellence of its deliv-

ery execution to end-customers.

End-customers will perceive a single point of an existing company as its core. Their repeat purchase from this company, instead of from its competition, makes that core evident. A start-up's core comes from how it studied the market for at least a decade to find its unlimited potential and business viability there. You can consider the business you are trying to enter as your core only if you can match your personal expertise and competency with it, and have the stamina to encounter up and down situations there. Refine that every three years on how your end-customers perceive your core.

From my personal experience of working in several countries, I've understood that seeding and nurturing the core makes business sustainable, and differentiates it from trading business. Indian enterprises while driving one brand for multiple industry opportunities will face enormous problems in establishing their perceived core. In global business that's already in India today, not driving with perceived core can be a stumbling block.

Nobody prohibits an entrepreneur from entering multiple industries.



When you have money, you can go wherever you want, but with a single brand it is tough. Do end-customers know that L'Oréal belongs to Nestlé? Or that brands like Cartier, Dunhill, Van Cleef and Arpels, Piaget, Mont Blanc are all part of Richemont holding company? Each business keeps its perceived core separately. Similarly, LVMH has 60 au-

tonomous luxury brands from Louis Vuitton to Dior, Moët & Hennessy, Sephora hyperstore; while PPR drives YSL, Gucci, Puma and Fnac. It's interesting that Swatch, the low cost watch, has bought several prestige, luxury, high and middle range watch brands like Breguet, Omega, Tiffany, Longines, Rado, Tissot and Balmain while respecting its per-

ceived core. Swatch Group is a neutral entity from their basic range Swatch, while Endura is their private label.

Traditional Indian conglomerates with huge countrywide awareness often drive the corporate brand for every category. So when competing with specialists globally, their brands will never be competent. This shortcoming is historical consequence from the protected economy. Industrialists with clout used to grab the limited business opportunities the government licensed out, so their diversified companies became big brands bought by non-evolved domestic end-customers. To compete in today's consumer-driven global free economy, it's not enough to have large numbers of IIT-IMs, youth power, skilled labour and immense opportunity, unless companies have sharpened their perceived core.

Here's how the \$12 billion French conglomerate BSN globalised by honing their perceived core. With acquisitions, BSN grew to have 14 verticals by 1993, but profitability was 2.5% only. Among their businesses, dairy had high operating margin and its promising promise was health. Launching Activia with bifidus acid bacteria in 1987 brought huge value to their brand

Danone. So they took a strong disruptive strategy to seed their core to become global. Using "Active Health" as the perceived core, they changed the name to Groupe Danone. This allowed focus on three 'head' businesses related to health: dairy, water and biscuit. They discontinued all 'tail' categories, and kept biscuit upto 2007 for critical mass. To reinforce the perceived core, Active Health, they expanded inorganically into baby nutrition and medical nutrition. Today, Danone is the world's No. 1 dairy company with 2010 turnover being \$22.82 billion and profit margin 10%. This is called a core loving corporation for globalisation. It proves that if you do not have a perceived core, you can define it for your business now.

The Indian market is growing, but the near future will see severe global competition. When Indian companies meticulously build their core and discontinue with tall businesses, they will become winners tomorrow. With strong sustainability they can cash high profitability both locally and globally.

Shombit Sengupta is an international creative business strategy consultant to top managements. Reach him at www.shiningconsulting.com

India Inc learns to teach

Whether it's Gautam Adani's infrastructure institute or Kishore Biyani's Future Innoversity, business houses seek to overcome manpower shortage in sunrise sectors by getting into niche business management education

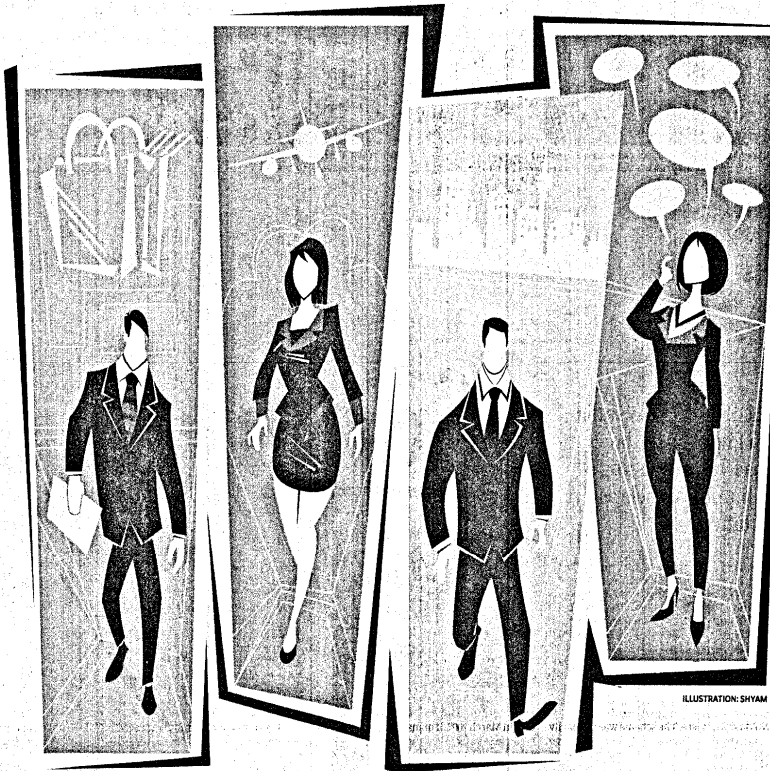
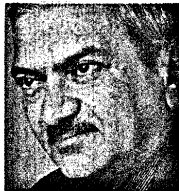


ILLUSTRATION: SHYAM



Bakul Dholakia
Vice-chairman & director,
Adani Institute of Infrastructure
Management

AS COMPETITION INCREASES, THE DIFFERENTIATION IN MANAGEMENT EDUCATION WILL NOT ONLY PROCEED IN THE DIRECTION OF QUALITY, BUT ALSO SECTORAL OR NICHE SPECIALISATION



Muralidhar Rao
CEO, Future Human
Development Limited

A LOT OF CORPORATES ARE ENTERING THE EDUCATION ARENA, LEADING NOT ONLY TO THE CORPORATISATION OF EDUCATION, BUT ALSO TO THE FORMULATION OF COURSES DRIVEN BY THE INDUSTRY DEMAND

Jyotsna Bhatnagar

THE BUSINESS of management education is coming of age as employers become more and more choosy, looking for managers who can hit the job running. No longer does a management degree or diploma guarantee placement. Indeed, gone are the days when one course met the requirements of all recruiters. Today, sectoral or niche management courses are becoming the need of the hour. With over 3,700 institutions offering management degrees and diplomas, it's the USP they bring to the table in terms of sector specialisations, which is going to be the new gamechanger.

Says Bakul Dholakia, former director of the country's top-rated b-school, the Indian Institute of Management at Ahmedabad and currently the vice-chairman and director of the two-year old Adani Institute of Infrastructure Management (AIIM): "Personally I believe that as competition increases across sectors, the differentiation in management education will not only proceed in the direction of quality but also sectoral or niche specialisation. Industry is now looking for people with solid management knowledge combined with the ability to apply it to specialised areas."

Not surprisingly then, when thrown the gauntlet of creating a world class b-school by Gautam Adani, chairman of one of the country's largest corporates in the infrastructure space, the Rs 35,000-crore Adani Group, Dholakia chose to "transplant the culture, pedagogy and approach to education and training inculcated at IIM" to create a management school specialising in infrastructure, the "fastest growing sector of the economy".

But why infrastructure? Recounts Dholakia, "Between 1988 when Gautambhai and I did the Foundations of the Adani Group as a partnership company and 1998 when the first vessel berthed at Mundra Port, he faced many challenges, the most formidable of which was to find trained managers for the diversification projects planned to execute. In the global trading business that Adani was in, finding people who understood both infrastructure and global trading was almost impossible. At that time, Gautambhai

had to resort to recruitment of suitable young managers who were willing to invest substantial time in learning infrastructure management on the job."

It was with this in mind and foreseeing a huge demand for qualified managers in the infrastructure sector, which as per the estimates of the Planning Commission needs an aggregate investment of more than \$500 billion over the 11th Plan period, the Adani-Dholakia duo set up a b-school offering courses in infrastructure management. According to Dholakia, infrastructure is the fastest growing sector of the economy with the result that demand for trained professionals for the area is growing rapidly. "The corporates in this sector are looking for people

IT'S NOT ONLY THE CORPORATES WHO ARE ENTERING THE EDUCATION ARENA TO CREATE NICHE MANAGEMENT SCHOOLS SPECIFIC TO THEIR AREAS OF OPERATIONS AND EXPERTISE. EVEN IGNOU HAS, IN A NOVEL INITIATIVE, SET UP A CENTRE EXCLUSIVELY FOR NICHE COURSES CATERING TO THE REQUIREMENTS OF INDIA INCLUSIVE

with domain knowledge since a straitjacketed application of management principles cannot be done."

Dilip Ponwal, the topper of AIIM's first one-year post-graduate programme in infrastructure management batch, chose the fledgling AIIM over the reputed XLRI where he had also bagged a seat for the simple reason that he was looking to hone his skills in the infrastructure space.

"Armed with seven years' experience in the power sector, this electrical engineer who had worked with multinationals like ABB and Atkins decided to top-up his qualification to improve his job prospects. "I got to know about AIIM from the internet and what swung my decision in its favour was that not only was it the first institute of its kind offering me courses in infrastructure, but also it had a galaxy of management gurus as its faculty members including Bakul Dholakia and Indira Parikh, former dean of IIMA." Ponwal has been absorbed by Adani Power at a remuneration 50% higher than his previous job and three rungs higher on the designation ladder.

But doesn't the fact that most of these specialised courses are not degree courses deter those who provide

them as well as those who pursue them? Quips an unfazed Dholakia, "The real criterion for judging these courses is placement and the market is the test." The fact that AIIM's first batch secured 100% lateral placements speaks for itself.

But infrastructure is not the only sector where b-schools are now offering specialisation. In view of the exponential growth in the retail sector, more and more players in the retail space are queuing up to set up schools imparting sectoral skills. For example, take the case of the Hyderabad-based Indian Retail School (IRS). Established in 2005 by the House of Pearl, a leading apparel exporting house, the school offers management programmes tailor-made for the fashion industry and retail sector.

Elaborates Rajendra Prasad Nadela, director of IRS, "The next five years are expected to throw up five million jobs in the retail sector at the entry level, which means we'll need thousands of trained managers as well. That's the reason why we chose to create a school, which provides specialised management training in all aspects of retail ranging from store operations to supply chain management and HR. Few people realise that retail business is unique in the sense that the store manager of a store is a mini-CEO, who is expected to be well-versed in all facets of management from manpower training to maintaining inventories to marketing, finance and accounts."

With a batch size of 200 students per annum, Nadela claims the school has a 100% placement record with recruiters including the who's who of the retail spectrum from international fashion brand Tommy Hilfiger to white goods giant Samsung. "In fact, there is so much demand for our students that we are planning to increase our batch size shortly," reveals Nadela.

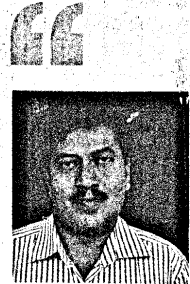
Endorsing the popularity of retail management courses, Suresh, an

alumni of IRS who now works for Landmark, a Tata enterprise, states, "I had an interest in retailing and was on the lookout for a career specific course in this sector. I happened to see IRS ranked as one of the best schools offering management programmes in a survey conducted by a leading news magazine and enrolled myself for a short term certificate programme in the school after my graduation. It has really helped in honing my knowledge of the sector."

But it's not only corporates who are entering the education arena to create niche management schools specific to their area of operations and expertise. Moving with the swiftness one does not normally associate with government institutions, the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) has, in a novel initiative, set up a centre exclusively for niche courses catering to the requirements of India.

IGNOU's Centre for Corporate Education Training and Consultancy, set up in 2008, is forging tie-ups with corporates, which would not only ensure trained manpower for them, but would also provide students numerous options for specialised management degree courses under the umbrella of a recognised university. Explains P R Nair, OSD and coordinator of the department, "It's a win-win for both students as well as corporates. Furthermore, unlike private institutes, which either offer diplomas or degrees, which may not be recognised, IGNOU provides recognised courses, which are structured with the assistance of the company, which ties up with us and in that sense, are completely customised to suit their sectoral requirements."

Most importantly, however, the IGNOU-corporate partnership courses are face-to-face full time programmes and not distance learning courses, which IGNOU normally offers and are, according to Nair, extremely affordable unlike courses offered even by the IIMs. A two-year PGP in management from an IIM costs upwards of Rs 12 lakh, fee of private institutes range anywhere between Rs 7 lakh and Rs 19 lakh while a two-year specialised MBA from IGNOU costs just Rs 2 lakh. "The main aim of setting up this centre is to reach out to as many sectors and teach programmes conducive to development and skill sets." Currently, IGNOU has two such



Rajendra Prasad Nadela
Director, Indian Retail School

THE NEXT FIVE YEARS ARE EXPECTED TO THROW UP FIVE MILLION JOBS IN THE RETAIL SECTOR AT THE ENTRY LEVEL, WHICH MEANS WE'LL NEED THOUSANDS OF TRAINED MANAGERS

public private partnerships in education. The first one, forged three years back, is in association with the Cochim International Airport, which offers a full-fledged two-year MBA in aviation management, two postgraduate programmes, one in airport technology and another in airport management as well as three certificate programmes in fire fighting, resources and commercial management.

However, it is the other PPP, which IGNOU forged with retail czar Kishore Biyani's Future group a year back, which is grabbing more eyeballs. The tie-up offers an MBA in retail apart from a slew of long and short-term diplomas and certificate programmes conducted at four centres created under the auspices of Future Innoversity at Ahmedabad, Bangalore, Delhi and Kolkata.

Says Muralidhar Rao, CEO of Future Human Development Limited (FHDL), which oversees such educational initiatives of the Future Group, "Of late, a lot of corporates are entering the education arena, leading not only to the corporatisation of education, but also to the formulation of courses driven by the industry demand. We, at Future, took a conscious decision to enter the management education arena largely because only a handful of top-notch institutes are producing good professionals who can do justice to functional areas. The industry now is demanding specific MBAs and the creation of specialists as opposed to generalists. By that yardstick, I'd say it reflects the maturing of management education in India."

Rao maintains that industry is also now taking an active interest in educating future managers because it is suffering from poor quality intake. Agrees Dholakia, "It is observed that companies recruit managers and then put them through 9-12 month long orientation and induction programmes within the organisation and it is only after that they are deployed as managers. At the time of setting up AIIM, I figured that if education itself could provide both the content and the content of the sector it would cut down on induction time by at least 50%—a value proposition for both the students and the recruiting companies."

Currently, Future Innoversity has a batch size of 200 students across all four centres, but in view of the phenomenal demand in the retail sector, plans are afoot to increase intake next year. Says Mitul Dave, a student of the inaugural batch of MBA in retail, "The career opportunities are phenomenal for us and I can't wait to complete my course."

As Rao succinctly sums it up, "A management degree is no longer seen as a placement ticket any more. Students and industry are clamouring for more and that gap can only be filled in by niche management courses."

Google changes how it searches web to get 'quality'

BLOOMBERG
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Google Inc said it changed the way the company carries out web searches to feature more "high-quality" sites, following criticism that its results favoured information of little value to users.

The change to Google's algorithms, which it relied on to discern what users want when they searched the web, affected 12 per cent of queries, the company said. Google made the change this week, aiming to give higher rankings to sites with original content, in-depth reports or "thoughtful" analysis.

"This update is designed to reduce rankings for low-quality sites — sites which are low-value add for users, copy content from other websites or sites that are just not very useful," the company said in a blog posting late Thursday. Google, which gets most of its sales from search-engine

advertising, has received complaints that spammers and websites game its system to receive prominent placement. The company has made other changes in recent months aimed at quelling concerns over so-called content farms, which tailor information in such a way that it takes precedence in results. "People are asking for even stronger action on content farms and sites that consist primarily of spammy or low-quality content," Mountain View, California-based Google said on its blog last month.

Demand media

Companies such as Demand Media Inc, a content farm that uses on an army of freelancers to generate material, needed Google to bring traffic to their sites, said Danny Sullivan, the editor-in-chief of search-analysis firm Search Engine Land. Demand Media's initial public offering in January put a spotlight on content farms, and Google's



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latest changes could affect their performance, he said. "What it does mean for them is they are definitely on notice," Sullivan said. "If they have subpar content, Google is going to try to take out that content. If they've getting

some of the revenue — or significant amounts of their revenue — from subpar content, then it's going to go to their bottom line." Larry Fitzgibbon, Demand Media's executive vice-president of media and operations, said

Google's changes hadn't had a big effect so far on its content and media business. "It's impossible to speculate how these or any changes made by Google impact any online business in the long term — but at this

point in time, we haven't seen a material net impact," Fitzgibbon said in a blog post.

Stock reaction

Demand Media's stock dropped as much as 7.8 per cent today following Google's announcement, before rebounding. The shares closed up 36 cents at \$22.96 on the New York Stock Exchange. They have risen 35 per cent since their debut last month.

Google advanced \$1.22 to \$610.04 on the Nasdaq Stock Market. The shares have climbed 2.7 per cent this year.

The company also has faced questions about retail sites boosting their search results. *The New York Times* reported earlier this month that J C Penney Co artificially increased its ranking on Google for a range of product categories. The retailer has since terminated its relationship with the consulting service that worked on its search performance, said Darcie Brossart, a

spokeswoman for Plano, Texas-based J C Penney. The company also has taken down more than 2,000 Web links that were set up to boost its results, she said. The links weren't authorized by J C Penney, and the site saw no financial benefit from the higher search results, Brossart said.

Overstock.com

The Wall Street Journal raised similar questions about Overstock.com Inc, saying Google was penalising the e-commerce site by moving its links down in search results.

The site was enabling university webmasters to provide discount links to students and faculty, which Google didn't believe should influence its algorithms. Overstock CEO Patrick Byrne said in an e-mailed statement. The e-commerce company discontinued the program and worked aggressively to pull down or deactivate the links, he said.

Google also faces more

competition from Microsoft Corp's Bing search engine. Google's market share of US queries dropped to 65.6 per cent in January from 66.6 per cent the previous month, according to ComScore Inc. Bing accounted for 13.1 per cent of searches in January, up from 12 per cent.

Earlier this month, Google announced a feature for its Chrome Web browser that lets users block unwanted sites from search results. Feedback from that effort didn't influence the latest changes, though the adjustment does appear to play down many of the sites that users were blocking, Google said in the blog posting.

"At this point, anybody providing content and making money from it is highly dependent on the traffic from Google," said Whit Andrews, an analyst with Stamford, Connecticut-based Gartner Inc. "Any content provider is reading that blog entry exhaustively."