Newspaper Clips

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Amar Ujala ND 04/09/2013 P-3

सांसदों ने किया आईएसएम छात्रों का समर्थन

नई दिल्ली(ब्यूरो)। धनबाद के इंडियन स्कूल ऑफ माइंस (आईएसएम) से आए छात्रों का धरना जंतर-मंतर पर दूसरे दिन भी जारी रहा। इस दौरान राहुल गांधी से मिलने की मांग कर रहे छात्रों को बुधवार सुबह उनसे मिलकर बात कहने का आश्वासन मिला। वहीं, आईआईटी काउंसिल में शामिल सांसद दीपेंद्र सिंह हुड्डा ने मांगों को 16 सितंबर को होने वाली मीटिंग में उठाने और दर्जा दिलवाने की मांग करने का भरोसा दिलाया। इस दौरान जंतर-मंतर पर पहुंचे सांसद महाबल मिश्रा और जगदंबिका पाल ने मामले को संसद में शून्य काल में उठाने का आश्वासन दिया।

Financial Chronicle ND 04/09/2013 P-11

The college as a mini-university

Arun Nigavekar

INDIA is a great country when it comes to creation of policy that touches every domain connected with the growth of a society. Growth is connected with the social, political and, if possible, economic advantages of a nation. Political parties, state governments and the central government not only believe in these aspects, they also realise that it works at the state and national levels. Yet none of them studies or does a detailed analysis through statistics or from expert advisers whether a new policy is implementable or not and whether such an approach is applicable in our country. We have been devising and following this non-explainable approach since independence.

Education is a concurrent list subject, meaning it is under the control of both the centre and states. The nation has produced voluminous reports on this subject over the past six decades. All of these were of high standards with wonderful application details, if one were to compare them with the reforms that have happened in the developed world over the past few decades. World over, countries have completely reworked the scope and dimension of 'knowledge' needed in the emerging social and economic order.

There have been research and development on new curricula, on the delivery of education to the 'pulsating youth' and on giving exposure to students on the ground realities in countries that are geographically at different locations but have populations who look at the idea of 'one world' more meaningfully. They trust that 'education' alone can bring in changes and, hence, their children and youth should get access to the '21st century education enriched with knowledge'.

In our country also, we believe in ushering in change through education, but what we lack is reforms. As a nation we have had a tradition of making every member of the family well-developed both under the British empire and also as an independent nation over the past six decades.

For the past 10 years, the government has been talking about making access to education easy and affordable. It has brought in several reforms in the higher education sector, but none of them have been 'passed by Parliament' because the HRD ministry did very little in terms of R&D on the need, scope and applicability of the structures it wanted to create.

The recent talk of adopting a new policy for restricting the number of affiliated colleges under a university is one such example. The human resources development (HRD) ministry has come up with a new proposal under the Rashtriya Uchattar Shiksha Abhiyan (Rusa), which mandates that no university should affiliate more than 200 colleges. It is a fact that almost each university has more than 200 colleges today. For example, Pune, Anna and Osmania varsities have 811, 617, 901 affiliated colleges, respectively. In such a scenario, the new proposal seems non-usuable unless both the centre and state governments create new universities. This is a difficult process and the governments would find it tough to invest in the creation of new universities. A big task also in view of the financial demands of universities. It is thus obvious that the proposal is not going to work in its present form.

What are our problems? First, the pressure of numbers and to address it universities ended up picking more colleges. Secondly, the enormous delay in not bringing in the required changes to enhance the utility and quality of education is also a big problem. One needs to make such changes in college education to meet the demands of the job givers or those who desire to become entrepreneurs. Thirdly, the lethargy in moving with time has become a part of academic operations in colleges. Finally, an acute no-change approach of people who establish universities is also a great issue. The student community today is familiar with the expectations of industries and business communities. They are disturbed by the stagnant college education system.

The legal structure of universities needs to be revised completely on these issues. Indeed we should create an entirely fresh legal framework that triggers innovative reforms in colleges. To make this happen, we must make colleges fully autonomous and ask them to follow a credit-based modular structure as a framework for graduate-level programmes. Give them full freedom to take academic and operational decisions and make them responsible for accepting the total credibility in respect of decisions and their implementations. In short, we should create a fully autonomous and responsible entity that, in principle, operates as a mini-university and gives degrees in collaboration with the university to which it is attached.

Thus, we would be creating a structure that would allow individual colleges to become free in bringing in innovations and also be an owner of the education delivered there. The degree certificates that would be given by the university would show the names of both the colleges and the university to which they are attached. Colleges can also enhance financial earnings, which would allow them to support innovations in teaching and learning processes. Thus, both the university and affiliated colleges would become joint-entity in addressing the challenges of numbers and creating value in education.

(The writer is former UGC chairman, founder director of NAAC and a former vice-chancellor of the University of Pune)

Biplab Banerjee

NEED FOR INNOVATION: There have been research and development on new curricula, on the delivery of education to the 'pulsating youth' and on giving exposure to students to the ground realities

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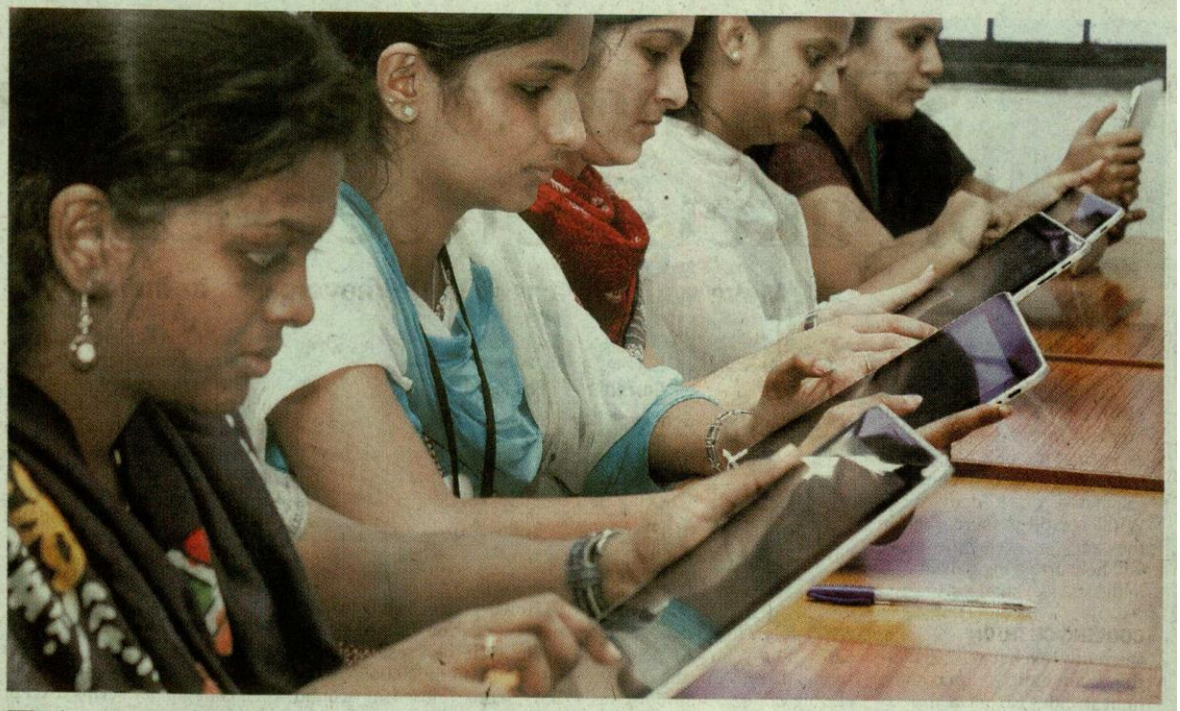
Higher education ignored

There has been too much focus on primary education.

Shantanu Prakash



IT's the way to go about learning.

Going by the reams of data and research material on primary education, it would seem that higher education is a poor cousin of primary education in India. Or, that it is considered merely a secondary part of a process and would take care of itself, if the first were fixed.

There is no argument that a solid primary education edifice would make the progression to secondary and higher levels smoother.

The ASER Survey 2011, an all-India representative survey of school children in rural areas, found that only 58 per cent of children enrolled in class three to five could read a class one text. Less than half — at 47 per cent — were able to do simple two-digit subtraction.

And only half of the children in classes five to eight could use a calendar.

So it is obvious that we have to not only scale and expand the reach of education to underserved areas of the country, but to establish clearly achievable benchmarks of quality outcomes to ensure educational consistency up the chain.

NEED FOR PERSPECTIVE

But that is where the relationship ends, because we have seen that primary and higher education are two distinct ends of a process, each beset with its unique characteristics, limitations and possibilities.

Higher education indicators in India prove conclusively that this correlation is misplaced and can be singularly damaging to the country's education landscape.

Startling facts abound to prove this point. India's gross enrolment ratio (GER) in higher education is just around 18 per cent compared to China's 30 per cent, the US's 83 per cent and South Korea's 91 per cent.

A Nasscom-McKinsey study states that only one out of 10 Indian students with degrees in humanities, and one out of four engineering graduates are employable.

Worse, only 30 per cent of universities, 16 per cent of colleges and 10 per cent of management institutes are accredited in the country.

Clearly, the emphasis we have given higher education is way behind optimal.

It could be argued, perversely indeed, that in the pursuit of fixing our multilevel, multidimensional problems with primary education we have almost sacrificed higher education at the altar.

However, this cannot go on and although there are signs of both worry and repair, we need to do a lot more, more quickly, to have any impact.

To begin with, we have to place policy in perspective with reality. Education as a right is constitutionally enshrined but the delivery of this enshrinement is stunted, owing to excessive state control at almost every level — a clear case of intention thwarted by effort!

PRIVATE INVOLVEMENT

There is, therefore, an urgent need to unshackle the system and allow private partnership on a massive scale to energise the sector and bring the fruits of education to a mass of India's underserved learners at both ends of the market.

Conversely, while the market for higher education is growing, the supply is constricted due to paucity of quality teachers. Academicians must be highly paid but in an environment of accountability.

Allowing universities and institutions the freedom to scale up or down their remunerative models in accordance with their market strengths would streamline the current mismatch in the teaching profession and give a fillip to deserved, merit-based employment to teachers.

Similarly, there is a contradiction in terms that while we argue for a freer environment for institutions to exist, a number of those that are already existent do not conform to state accreditation norms and remain unrecognised. This is further complicated by excessive state-administered regulation.

ACCREDITATION METHODS

Two things need to be put in place: a simplified template of regulations, and a trusted and simple accreditation methodology outside the clutches of established bureaucratic norms.

If teachers can be outsourced and allowed to teach on contract, so can a qualified third party accreditation system be employed to allow for an easier, faster and more transparent validation model.

This would release one of the biggest bottlenecks in higher education delivery and at the same time force 'fly by night' institutions out of the market.

India's youth needs an equal chance to compete for itself globally. Skill-based, relevant and contemporary curriculum is, therefore, the need of the hour.

New possibilities are emerging in the employment market. Our colleges and institutions must respond to these new developments quickly, nimbly.

Old ideas in higher education must make way for new initiatives because technology based, IT-enabled education will define the contours of the next decade. India must be ready for this challenge with concrete plans to foster a new culture of higher education policies.

Today, owing to the huge demand-supply gap, there is a need for creation of 1,500 colleges and universities to reach a respectable Growth Enrolment Ratio (GER) of 30 per cent. But higher education is a bullish sector.

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Times Of India ND 04/09/2013 P-19

Meteor hit may have led to dawn of civilization

It Caused Abrupt Climate Change 12,900 Years Ago, Stirring Far-Reaching Effects On Animals & Humans

Washington: A cataclysmic meteor impact in Canada about 12,900 years ago may have been the trigger for the dawn of civilization on Earth, researchers, including an Indian-origin scientist, have found.

For the first time, a dramatic climate shift that has long fascinated scientists has been linked to the impact in Quebec, Canada of an asteroid or comet by Dartmouth College researchers and their colleagues.

The event took place about 12,900 years ago, at the beginning of the Younger Dryas period, and marks an abrupt global change to a colder, dryer climate, with far-reaching effects on both animals and humans, the scientists say.

In North America the big animals, including mastodons, camels, giant ground sloths, and saber-toothed cats, all vanished, researchers said. Their human hunters, known as the Clovis people, set aside their heavy-duty spears and turned to a hunter-gatherer subsistence diet of roots, berries, and smaller game.

"The Younger Dryas cooling is a very intriguing event that impacted human history in a profound manner," said Mukul Sharma, a professor in the department of earth sciences and one of the authors of the study.

"Environmental stresses may also have caused Natufians in the Near East to settle down for the first time and pursue agriculture," said Sharma.

That these powerful environmental changes occurred is not in dispute, but there has been controversy over why they happened. The classical view of the Younger Dryas cooling interlude has been that a surge of meltwater from the North American ice sheet was behind it all.

However, Sharma and his colleagues have discovered conclusive evidence linking an extra-terrestrial impact with this environmental transformation.

The report focuses on spherules, droplets of solidified molten rock expelled by the impact.

The spherules in question were recovered from Younger Dryas boundary layers at sites in Pennsylvania and New Jersey, the layers having been deposited at the beginning of the period.

The geochemistry and mineralogy profiles of the spherules are identical to rock found in southern Quebec, where Sharma and his colleagues say the impact took place.

"What is exciting in our paper is that we have for the first time narrowed down the region where a Younger Dryas impact did take place, even though we have not yet found its crater," said Sharma. PTI

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DEEP IMPACT

HT Mumbai

RANKING BOX

The ranking of the Japanese universities is relatively higher in the Times Higher Education World Reputation Rankings. As per the QS World University Ranking 2012-2013, ten universities were ranked in the top 200 with the University of Tokyo, Kyoto University and Osaka University being ranked in the top 50. Others include Tokyo Institute of Technology (65), Tohoku University (75), Nagoya University (86), Kyushu University (128), Hokkaido University (138), Waseda University (198) and Keio University (200).

The University of Tokyo and Kyoto University rank high even in the Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2012-2013 at 27 and 54, respectively. Tokyo Institute of Technology, Tohoku University and Osaka University also feature in the top 150. In the World Reputation Rankings, Tokyo and Kyoto are the highest ranked Japanese institutions, at nine and 23 respectively.