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The Changing face of Indian Education

Khaniya Reena V.*

With encouragement of committed private players, permission to adopt Maverick approaches to funding and a thrust on knowledge creation, India will be all set to become an education super power within the coming decade. Says prominent educationist.

-Sunil Karve.

With a 6% share of world income and the fourth rank in Purchasing Power Parity, one can safely conclude that India has finally arrived. Over the last 50 years, the Government of India has provided full policy support and substantial public funds to create one of the world's largest systems of higher education. On the science and technology side, India has churned out a large number of scientists, engineers and technicians who today rule the roost in intellectual hubs like NASA and the Silicon Valley. There is no doubt that India is extremely rich in intellectual capital that possesses a strong value system.

In the year 2000 the adult literacy rate (% aged 15 and older) was 58.5% (72.3 % for males, 44.4% for females). These figures have all nearly doubled since 1961 and are higher than in most other South Asian nations. Total Government expenditures on education in 2001 were Rs 841.8 billion, which was 13.2 % of all government expenditures and 4% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Since the 1950s, government expenditures on education have increased steadily, as have the number of educational institutions from the primary to the university level.

Over the years, with the increase in population and literacy, the number of educational institutes for higher learning has also increased, but not sufficiently to meet the demand. The influx of private institutes has taken place because the government was unable to meet the demands of the growing population and higher education needs. This is a good sign since this will largely contribute to nation building. With the IT revolution and technology development, Changes are slowly taking place especially in the last five years. We also need more private institutes, but of the right kind. Funds that are being allocated by the government to the education sector will mainly go to the primary and secondary levels. This is a good, as it will strengthen primary education will mainly go to the primary and secondary levels. This is a good move, as it will strengthen primary education. In case of higher education, the government would like to leave the responsibility to the private sector. Which is why universities deemed and autonomous universities are being set up.

The future belongs to India

There seems to be direct correlation between the increase in the number of colleges and universities (and thus students) and the GDP of the country. Logically, with the increase in the number of students the number of educated and

*Khaniya Reena V. Dept of Sociology Saurashtra University Rajkot

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talented manpower entering is also large and this leads to the development of the nation.

In the next ten years, Indian universities will be in the same league as the top universities across the globe. In order that this may be achieved, we will have to work on our technology and infrastructure. The focus must therefore be on encouraging the committed private players. Also, educational institutions should strive to create knowledge and should be allowed to adopt maverick approaches to raise funds.

The challenge here is to identify the committed institutes and eliminate the selfish black sheep.

The right kind of private institutes are the ones that are purely driven by the passion and commitment towards imparting quality education. They strive to provide world-class infrastructure and facilities to the learners. The selfish black sheep are the ones who are solely concerned with protecting their own interests. Encouraging the right kind of private players could be a winning strategy since it can strengthen the DNA of the Indian education system.

Maverick approaches to funding private education institutes-

The constraints on the government treasury to fund the huge infrastructure required to build the right kind of learning ambience has led to an influx of private players into the education system. The setting up of deemed universities and autonomous institutions is a clear evidence of this. However, in order that quality is maintained it is important that these players have the winning combination of commitment and funding.

a) A professional cell for fund-raising

Institutes must look beyond establishing 'chairs' in the name of the corporate. The corporate world in the form of alumni can do much more than just this. They can partner with the institute for the projects and actively contribute funds to the cause they believe in. For this, the public/private institutions can set up a professional cell for fund-raising. An independent director whose sole responsibility would be fund-raising for the institute must man this cell. This is an international concept prevalent in almost every university abroad. The job responsibility of the Director-fund raising would be to establish strong linkages with the alumni, ascertain the fund requirements of each department in the institute, create project reports for funding for each section of the institute etc. Making project reports for each section and effort will help the corporate identify the correct fit and also reassure the corporate that the funds are being deployed for the right use.

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b) Full autonomy to private institutes

As mentioned previously, the right kind of private educational institutes must be encouraged. These institutes night their own challenges in the form of statutory fee fixation and administration norms. These challenges may prove to be roadblocks to the development of the institute in the form of paucity of funds. As per the Supreme Court judgment, the prerogative to fix fees and run a private un-aided institute must lie with the institute itself. Further, the institute should be given the autonomy to fix fees that will include the cost of education plus a reasonable surplus that will be used for the development of the institute. This judgment if implemented will eliminate the need for fees through donation.

Either the private players must be given the autonomy of administration and fee fixation of they must be allowed to adopt innovative medals for funding their expenses.

Focus on Knowledge Creation- in this lies the key to a brother tomorrow

Gone are the days when educational institutes were started with the sole aim of knowledge dissemination. The future belongs to educationists who believe in knowledge creation through high quality research and development. For this the institutes will have a strong focus on providing world-class ambience and infrastructure in which intellectual capital will thrive and bloom. India will thus be a knowledge hub where the public funds will be used for teaching, coaching and learning. In this way the educational institution will indulge in infinite value creation for the society.

It is now an accepted fact that India is going to become the next economic super power. But this cannot happen overnight, it will require sustained efforts on the part of educationists to offer superior quality of higher education so that the best talent is infused into the corporate world.

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