

TOWARDS AN 'EDUCATED' INDIA

Innovative methods are required to create an employable work-force for a fast changing world



EDUCATION has been the subject of many heated discussions in the country and higher education in particular has seen many winds of change blowing in recent times. There has been much news surrounding the withdrawal of recognition to some newly minted Deemed Universities and the passage of the Foreign Education Providers' Bill through the Cabinet creating a furor across. At the core of all the controversies is a very real issue that needs to engage the attention of industry, academia and the government - are we building the right skills through higher education to create employable youth for the country and the world?

A new Government, a new education movement in the country and the signs of revival in global economies - it won't be long before the old refrain of the war for talent starts all over again! The ICT industry itself will need close to 250,000 professionals every year to sustain and accelerate its pace of growth and with normal acceptance standards this would call for a minimum of 600,000 students to be trained each year and possibly another 100,000 to go through reskilling from different vocations. Add to that the need for providing advanced skills every year to at least a

million professionals currently employed in the industry and it is evident that nearly two million trainees will have to go through skills development processes every year.

There are good models that are worthy of emulation all over the world. The US **Community College Model** that enables continuing education and the opportunity to pick up relevant skills has deteriorated through the years, thanks to inadequate focus on quality, but is still one initiative that could work in many parts of the country. The **German Dual System** of education engages the corporate sector / industry associations and young aspiring job seekers in a sandwich model with active participation from industry in providing internships for students in the system. This system has to some extent succeeded in controlling unemployment levels in the country and is now aspiring to be the model for the future for the European Union.

The alternative is the **Chinese way** where hundreds of new Universities are being opened every year with strong support from the Communist Party as well as the Provincial Governments to convert millions of aspirants to world-class professionals. While this scale of investment may nei-

ther be feasible nor appropriate for India and other parts of Asia and Africa, involvement of the private sector in a more formal manner and the opening up of higher education to high-quality foreign universities prepared to invest in significant campuses and educational facilities may enable more capacity building in all participating countries and states.

A future model of resource creation for the ICT industry in India and in every emerging nation may well be on the lines of the following **four-part model**.

1. **Talent assessment** of all young people in their early teens followed by awareness on possible career options that are in line with their aptitude. This could be provided by Government funded agencies like the Maharashtra and Rajasthan Knowledge Corporations which have been set up for this purpose with some participation by the private sector.

2. **Employability skills** imparted in all universities and colleges so that the conceptual education provided in Engineering, Liberal Arts, Science and other formal university programs with continually updated content relevant to the needs of the corporate sector so that graduates are able to hit the ground running when they join companies.

3. **Employment training**, aimed at graduates from the relevant and other disciplines conducted full-time at centres near the employment zones and fully supported by the corporate sector. These would serve as finishing schools, which may become unnecessary in the medium term once the employability movement takes firm root in the educational processes of the country.

4. **Functional and Technical update programs** provided through programs ranging in duration from a few days to a year or more, that provides advanced technical and management skills to industry professionals on a "just in time" rather than "just in case" basis and prepares them to assume higher responsibilities in the industry.

There is a lot to be done in India to enable a model like this to be conceptualized and implemented but early realization and a robust design of the new model can ensure that the country begins to see the benefits in a few years! The corporate sector can play a major role by extending a hand to academia through the provision of industry projects, faculty development programs for IT teachers and the participation of some senior and experienced professionals for building training content on new topics of relevance to the industry.

With the new blended learning models that are increasingly being adopted by training providers like GTT and NIIT and even some of the more progressive Universities in the country, it would be possible to adapt the same content into multiple formats for delivery through video, internet and even mobile devices and build a truly learner centric delivery model for the future.

(This article has been written by Dr Ganesh Natarajan, the Vice Chairman & CEO of Zensar Technologies. He also chairs the Higher Education Task Force for the CII in Western India.)

Utilising the Vacations

Vacation-time should be used well, to add to one's skill-sets

BY KAVERI ROY

AFTER the year's grind and haul, students give into the lure of summer vacations. They mostly feel that vacations are about having doing nothing serious and they feel that they have earned themselves a vacation. However, this is also the time when they can add to their skill-sets by opting for short-term courses that may come handy anytime.

The city has a number of vocational certificate courses to provide the students with opportunities to prepare for their careers choice. From a variety of self development courses to basic certificate courses in professional education; there is a variety to choose from and it can all be done while one is on a holiday.

Here are a few of the interesting and rewarding ways to utilize the vacations -

1. Self-development courses

Effective writing, public speaking, creative writing or professional presentation skills; These kind of one month courses would help brush the skills one needs to excel in their future professional endeavours. For aspirants or professionals, these courses could add finesse to their skills. Self-enhancement courses help in boosting confidence and endow the candidate with a universal advantage irrespective of the kind of profession one opts for. These courses are being offered at St. Xavier's College comprising Effective Writing Skills, Creative Writing, Professional presentation skills for a duration of 1 month each.

2. Fast-track specialization courses

Hobbies are often taken to the next level and developed into careers and for such kind of ambitions; vacations could be the budding ground. A 3-month cookery course or a month long basic pho-



TRENDS

graphy course for the aspiring chefs and photographers, while one is on a holiday. These fast track professional courses are an add-on before stepping into the rigorous specialized training.

3. Vocational courses

Vocational training imparts specialized skills and knowledge that helps to work in a professional environment. These courses are an addition to the qualifications one has. There is an array of vocational courses in the city, which are short term and help one to optimize the time at hand. Many of the technical professions that require a practical know-how can be learnt in such rapid courses. They help provide an overview of the choice of profession one wishes to take up. If an aspirant is

Some of the courses available include -

- Basic Photography course (1 month) at The Photographic Society of India;
- Certificate course in Cookery (3 months) at the Institute of Hotel Management, Catering;
- Certificate course in Radio Jockeying (2 months) at Saint Xavier's College;

- Training course in Book Publishing (28 days) at National Book Trust;
- Certificate course in Portfolio Design and Presentation technique (3 months) at National Institute of Fashion Technology;
- Certificate Course in Acting (3 months) at Zee Institute of Media Arts;
- Indian Tourism specialist training programme course (1 month) at KUONI ACADEMY;
- Course in Food and Beverage Service (42 days) at the Institute of Hotel Management, Catering Technology and Applied Nutrition.



undecided on the choice of career option, these courses can serve well in understanding the practical scenario before entering the industry.

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Holidays can be the best time to re-skill oneself and add to one's knowledge-base, to get that differential cutting-edge.

HAVE FUN AND LEARN

There are some interesting vacation-courses being offered at University of Mumbai. These include:

- ◆ Fun with Mathematics
- ◆ Fun with Chemistry
- ◆ Fun with Physics
- ◆ Fun with Astronomy
- ◆ Hobby Electronics And Robotics
- ◆ Conversational English (for 10th Students pass-outs)
- ◆ Cartoon Drawing
- ◆ Origami
- ◆ Hobby Magic

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SPIRITUAL MANAGEMENT-MANTRAS

How did you decide on becoming a monk? Can you share your journey?

I was born in Japan. Since my growing up years, I have had a strong interest in philosophy and religion and hence, I majored in Western Philosophy. Alongside, I realized that the traditional Japanese way of thinking was a great way of self-awareness. A deep desire to immerse myself in Japanese philosophical traditions led me to become a monk. I knocked at the gate of the temple and successfully passed its professional training with top honors, and have been working as a monk to restore valuable traditions of Japanese culture in the society. I have been working in this field for six years, and now, I am tackling an important but complex issue - modern temple management. A challenging issue that has not been successfully institutionalized yet.

What made you interested in Temple-Management?

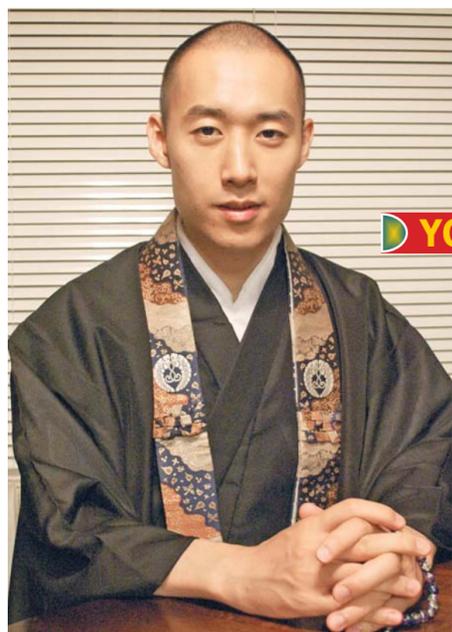
In the post-war period, Japanese have been facing a sense of loss of identity and crisis of confidence in their future. This was the scenario and one of the reasons for my opting to become a Buddhist monk, which I thought was the best way to support Japanese spiritually and ideologically. Through my study and work in temples for six years, I have increased my confidence in the potential of Buddhism. However, I have also realized that there is a critical shortage of monks who can update temples to meet modern needs - without spoiling their religious traditions. After graduation, I will return to my temple. As a part of my management degree in India, I am planning to specialize in Strategy and Leadership, and Entrepreneurship.

There are many well-known business schools around the globe. What made you come to India?

India astounds me with the beauty and the blend of Indian tradition and modern architecture. I want to study its economy and society to understand India's global impact. India's strength in outsourcing is expanding to include innovation in other fields, including bio-tech and pharmaceuticals. With every passing year, India is making an increasing mark on the world's economic and political system. Driven by rapid economic growth, India has also significantly increased global influence. Amongst the three Asian powers - India, China, and Japan, I believe that the relationship of the two democratic powers will become more important.

India has significantly influenced Japan for a long time through Buddhism. If there were no Indian influence, Japanese culture would not have evolved to where it has today. I greatly admire Indian's diverse and profound spirituality, which somehow seems to be losing its vital force in Japan. Studying in India is helping me to explore my spiritual roots. (Inter-

Keisuke Matsumoto (30) a Buddhist Priest of Komyoji Temple, Tokyo, decided to come to India for an MBA degree. Interestingly, he plans to use his learnings of management-mantras, towards his chosen vocation of Temple-Management. He shares his unusual pursuit with Ami Gandhi.



The Monk-turned-Management Student

- ◆ Graduated with B.A. degree in Literature from The University of Tokyo
- ◆ The first Japanese student to be admitted to the full-time Post Graduate Programme at ISB, Hyderabad
- ◆ Initiated Temple Café to rejuvenate the temple's traditions, back home
- ◆ Also established a Non-Profit Organization to promote social activities in temples
- ◆ A member of Virtual Temple "HIGANJI"
- ◆ Was head of Komyoji Young Buddhist Association and was awarded "Shoriki Matsutaro Prize" from a Foundation for Education, in 2008.
- ◆ The story on Temple Café has been published as a book in Japan and Taiwan.

estingly, he has named his son Ganga.) After my graduation, I plan to write a book about my experiences in India, to share with the Japanese people.

How would a course in Strategy Leadership, and Entrepreneurship help you in your work with temples?

I believe that with right strategy, efficient leadership and entrepreneurial abilities the temples can be updated to meet the needs of the modern-day. To give a little background, in the past, temples were very important for the Japanese at every point of their life, however, with time they have started losing their popularity significantly. Today, most people think of the temples just as ceremonial halls for memorial services.

In 2005, to rejuvenate the temple's good traditions, I initiated a new project in my temple, Temple Cafe. I believed that, with an innovative approach, we could attract younger people by opening the temple to the public. We started serving tea, coffee, and sweets made by the monks. The Café eventually became a point of attraction and more and more people started coming to the temple who had otherwise not been coming. In 2007, I established a non-profit organization to promote social activities in temples, along with young monks and supporters.

Business schools are supposed to imbibe profit-making lessons. How would it help a revolutionary model for a non-profit entity like a temple?

A B-school is the place where we study how to enhance and improve our own business - it is not just about how to make profit. Taking advantage of the learnings of modern management, I believe Buddhist temples can further contribute to the society more efficiently.

What are your future plans?

I would continue being a monk. I want to promote communication between spiritual leaders and the citizens of the modern world. As the land of 'Art Of Living', India has been very inspiring. I would love to be the cultural bridge between India and Japan.

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