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## Message from Director



Going by enrolment numbers, India can boast of having the world's third-largest higher educational system. It has been duly acknowledged by policy makers and national leaders that the youth is the most important asset for our nation, and in the future of the youth lies the future of the country. Indeed, one of the key factors in many of the positive economic projections for India is the massive demographic dividend that lies in India's future. Unlike many of the 'aging' developed economies, India has a young population that is still growing. If empowered and enabled rightly, there is no cap to how much this asset pool can appreciate in value.

However, if current state of affairs continue, this 'Asset' could also end up being a big 'Liability' that the country could struggle to come to terms with. A huge growing young population is of less productive value, if the people lack the skills and qualifications required for economic progress. And herein lies the role of Higher Education in our country.

The call for improvement in Higher Education has been long emphasized by academicians and educationists. The demand for more and more quality institutions is highlighted by the fact that India has a huge student diaspora around the world. Unfortunately, at home this demand is matched only partially - in quantity, and not in quality. Liberalized reforms in the higher education sector has resulted in an explosion of institutions - with no uniformity in content or quality. This legion of lax institutions have kept no control on teaching methodologies, course relevancy or even the grading requirements - and ultimately make the degree worthless.

This disparity in quality hits the students the worst - who ultimately are unable to find productive use for their degree. Subsequently, this has also pushed employers to ask more from the candidates than just the basic qualification required for the job. Therefore, we end up seeing a job market where graduates and post graduates apply for clerical roles, and employers put out vacancies with specific requirements for 'Premier /Tier 1/2 College' applicants.

An intensive course like an MBA carries with it the understanding that the student is now groomed to think strategically and manager-like. But when the labour market is flooded with MBAs who have hugely varying levels of rigour behind their degrees, it negatively impacts the salary and employability. Even students from legitimate institutions have to face the brunt of this disparity.

It is here that the government and concerned individuals must bring their attention to. A country like India does need higher education institutions in good number; but there should also be a minimum guarantee of quality that must be expected from them. Industry can also play a role in this - by increasing their interaction early on with these institutions - thereby preparing students for the actual role. Both in Private, and State-owned higher education institutions - there must be protocols and personnel held accountable to ensure at least a competitive parity among degrees of the same name.

It is a known fact that there is a wide gap between what the job market needs in its employees and what the graduates are able to provide to the industry. This gap is not helped with qualifying degrees, but with the skill sets that meet the employer expectations. There is a strong need to re-train and re-orient the many higher educational institutions towards the latest course contents, and industry requirements. Excellence is not a monopoly of the few in the Tier 1 & 2 schools. A huge change can be expected if these educational standards are ensured in all institutions that claim to be temples of knowledge.

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