

# Quality education for future citizens

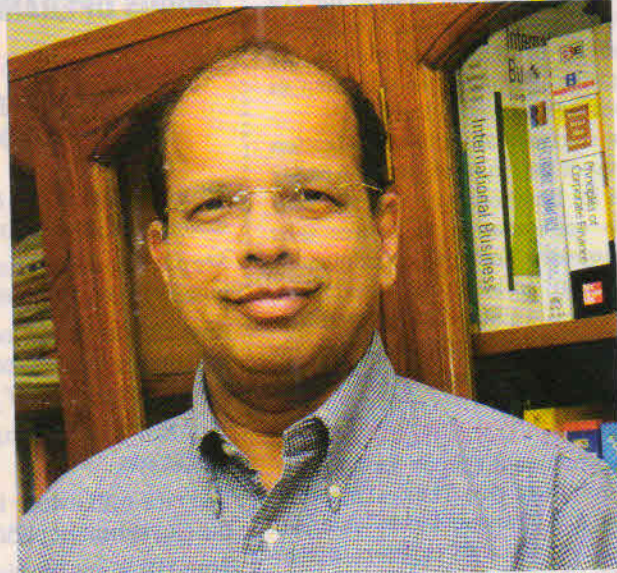
By KP Shashidharan

In October, 2013, Transparency International, the global barometer for measuring corruption indices across the world, published global corruption report in the education sector. No doubt, all over the world corruption is rampant almost in every sphere, but corruption in education is particularly disquieting. A corrupt education system may naturally lead to producing more dishonest future citizens, interested in intensifying the business of corruption wherever they are positioned, creating a vicious cycle of corruption and pushing the majority of the hapless millions into the vicious cycle of poverty.

Corruption in education can show many ugly faces. Parents face corruption when they seek admission for their children from the kindergarten to elementary, secondary, college, university and professional institutions. Bribes become the generally accepted practice not only for getting admission, leaking question papers, copying and obtaining good grades in examinations. Incompetent teachers who are ready to pay bribe are preferred to meritorious ones. Postings, transfers, promotions are all influenced by unethical considerations. Budgetary resources allocated to education get diverted and misused. Cases of ghost teachers and awarding fraudulent certificates for money will be increasing unless checked on time. Corruption in education is detrimental, inflicting the entire gamut of the education sector, depriving equal access, causing deterioration in quality of education, leading to fabricated academic results and unreliable research products.

A UNESCO Report shows that there is acute teacher absenteeism, a high drop-out rate, low quality teaching, poor infrastructure and maintenance, class room overcrowding, adverse political, religious and ethnic influence, gross inequality between the rich and the poor in access to education. There is no uniformity in syllabus or curriculum or emoluments to the teachers. The prime objective of education of building competent, honest citizens who respect the rule of law and human rights for nation building gets defeated in a corrupt environment. Personal efforts, intelligence, merit and competence do not matter where success only comes through manipulation, favouritism, bribery and influence.

Even after spending nearly 8 percent of the GDP in education, the benefits of education do not percolate down to the underprivileged. Education being a fundamental human right, a major driver of human and economic development, it is time to clean up the vitiated environment. Equal access to quality education must be available to all sections of the people. Unless and until corruption is substantially curtailed the very future of society is going to be clouded bringing serious doubt on achieving the millennium Development Goal of comprehensive primary



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school education for all children by 2015.

There is substantial allocation to the sector in the Union Budget for 2013-14; Rs.65, 869 crore was allocated for capacity building and job-led education, the flagship scheme Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan was allocated Rs.27, 258 crore for the Right to Education Act to all children in the 6-14 age group. The National Skill Development Corporation will provide Rs.10, 000 to every individual for skill development. With incubators set up by corporates in academic institutions qualifying as corporate social responsibility activity, entrepreneurship in higher education institutions is expected to get a major boost.

As education is a profitable entrepreneurship, many an educational trust may do many an uncharitable deed; "Those warmongers against injustice / Might even betray the trust vested in them/ Those 'Trusts' created for a cause/ Might tempt them indulging uncharitable deed!" ("That Benign Smile" from 'Painting Symphony') Corruption was deeply anguishing as Shakespeare penned in his Sonnet LXVI: "Tired with all these, from these would I be gone, / Save that, to die, I leave my love alone." We should not helplessly lament on this issue. It is time for the nation to take effective measures to arrest corruption in all spheres with added emphasis on corruption in the field of education to build future citizens especially when India as an economic power is determined to move ahead like an awakened elephant steadily scaling up along the difficult terrain of economic growth to secure a place as a superpower in the comity of nations in a foreseeable future. ■

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