

# HE BATS FOR INDUSTRY- INSTITUTE LINKAGES

Industries must lead the way to increase gross enrollment ratio from a paltry 18 to 30 per cent by 2020, says P Rajendran, chairman of CII's national higher education committee



Rajendran, Sunil Kant Munjal, chairman, Hero Corporate Service, Prof Peter Hodgson, Deakin University, Australia, and Lachlan Strahan, Deputy High Commissioner of Australia to India at the fourth Global Higher Education Summit held on November 8 in New Delhi

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**P** Rajendran, chairman, Confederation of Indian Industry's (CII) national higher education committee, and co-founder and COO of NIIT, spoke to *edex* about the importance and impact of university and industry linkages.

**As chairman of CII's national higher education committee, what steps are you taking to improve university-industry linkages?**

I was invited to chair CII's higher education committee and I have been associated with them for three years. Our mission was to understand and take appropriate action for better university-industry linkages. The important question was to identify the job of industry in the higher education spectrum and this can only start with private industries investing heavily in the sector. There is a base for this, given that there is still a large requirement of colleges across the country. The number of children outside the school system has come down and there are government sta-

tistics to support this. About 12 to 13 per cent go to colleges and universities and that's called GER (gross enrollment ratio). The recent numbers are 18 per cent. Plus, the vision of former Union HRD minister Mr (Kapil) Sibal was to bring GER to 30 per cent by 2020. Our mission is to take that forward and build the capacity to accommodate a larger number of students.

**What are the key factors for improving the higher education sector?**

Many people consider infrastructure to be the most important factor. It is not. We need to change our regulations. We do not need that much more investment to create one more seat. But we may need a certain kind of technology. Meaning, if you start using more technology in the classroom, you reduce the space on one side and where required like in the sports field, a lot can be done. Plus, industry professionals need to be more involved with running education institutions, where we put our expertise at

running companies to offer realistic recommendations.

**What role does the industry play in education?**

Industry has to play a role in terms of working with universities. Its role is also to understand what is being already done and how to scale that up. It's about saying that we are aligned to the future of technology as applied in industry. Somebody rightly said, you cannot base your institution only to service the industry. It has to go beyond, but that does not mean you stop doing it.

**But how is not shutting down an institution that does not match up to the industry standard a solution?**

Many of these engineering institutions which were shut down were churning out graduates on a daily basis. What is the use of shutting a college. The government and students themselves want to be educated. The answer is never shutting down an institution. Shutting down means hundreds of crores of rupees is wasted and that is never of use to anybody.

**So what is the solution then?**

Education is a long-term process. The best solution is for both the sides — the institutions and the industry to create something sustainable. If there are researches, the goal and bar should be raised next year. CII can keep itself on its toes. I am a proponent of having young PhD students. The other solution is to improve the pedagogy in the country. We must strive to train the trainer. At NIIT also we have mentor professors whose main purpose is to guide professors and help them create a knowledge platform for students.

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