

Education, public or private, MUST LEAD TO GOOD

KAVIYA SANJEEVI | CHENNAI

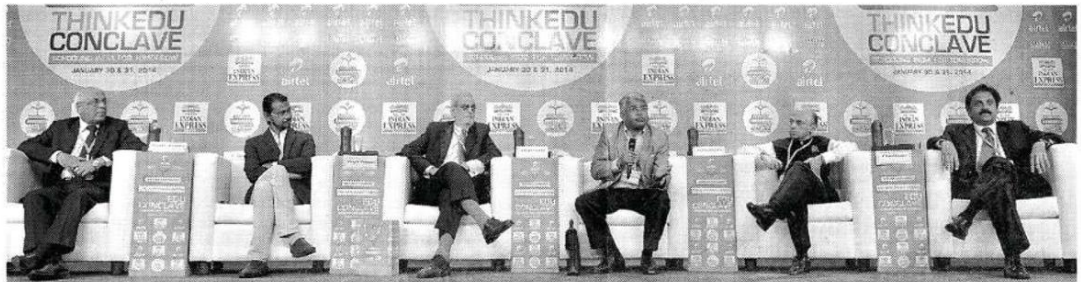
India is the second-largest populated country and we have the third largest education system in the world. Both public and private players in the education sector play a role in shaping young citizens. At the conclave, we had panelists who analysed these roles in a session titled 'Private education leads to public good', and all of them agreed on the need to reform the current education system.

Chairperson of the panel, V Raghunathan, CEO, GMR Varalakshmi Foundation, began by highlighting recent changes in education and stressed the need for a 50-50 partnership between the public and private sector. He explains, "There may be private players who are contributing enormously to public good and there are public players who have not completely understood their potential. Education certainly encourages people, builds skill and confidence, and enhances their economic activity. In that sense, we can say that any higher education leads to public good."

He also pointed that hardly anyone could deny the fact that private education leads to 40-60 per cent of public good that we enjoy today.

Suneel Galgotia, chancellor, Galgotias University, also agreed with Raghunathan. Citing the change that has taken place in the past 15 years, he said, "Due to private education, the geographical count of colleges has increased. They reach a large number of students. Private universities also provide a disciplined methodology of teaching. They are enabled with a quick curriculum and examination reforms, and they have better connectivity to industries. Private institutions also rely on technology, with specific emphasis on feedback," he said.

While both Raghunathan and Galgotia spoke on the pos-



From left: VPS Arora, Kaustav Sengupta, Vijay K Thadani, V Raghunathan, Suneel Galgotia and R Ravichander



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— Vijay K Thadani, CEO, NIIT University

itives of private education, Vijay K Thadani, CEO, NIIT University, spoke on how both private and public sector needs to work together to provide quality education. As a beneficiary of public education who has now "joined the gang that provides private education", he brought perspectives from both worlds.

He warned that if the education system did not keep up with the changing needs of the job sector, we would be lagging behind. "We can't predict the kinds of jobs we will have in 2020. Plus, with the delay in changing curriculum, there is no way we will be ready."

Thadani also noted how the learner itself was changing. Elucidating, he explained: "We are now



dealing with millennials (or Gen Y), who come with very different qualities and characteristics. They have very specific lifestyles. It is enough to say that when you are preparing for the next day's class, the students have already read it and discussed on Facebook. So they could teach you by the time you get to class." He also advocated a change in methodology saying, "Online learning is here to stay."

Kaustav Sengupta, associate professor, NIFT Chennai, also spoke about the change seen in students and the need to tap their creative side. Suggesting a modification of the RTE, he said it could ideally be the Right to Creative Education, wherein learning would be creativity-based. "We would not

end up producing robots, but create students who have clarity on what needs to be done. Schools should also deliver experiential learning, which will enable students to take forward something that they learnt in life. Open-minded and appreciative teachers would be more inspirational, he says. Research and education should also be an integral part of the primary school, he says, pointing out ways to enrich the learning experience.

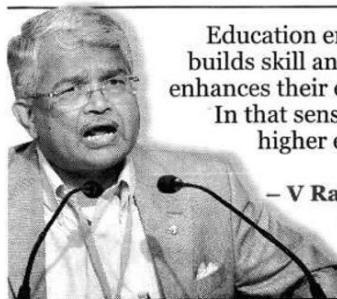
Another speaker, VPS Arora, speaking from his experience of heading both a public university and a private one — having been the vice-chancellor of Kumaun University, and currently heading Supertech University — spoke on how there are certain obstacles

universities. He said, "If we need education to be a game changer that leads to prosperity and brings in social and cultural transformation, we need to look beyond intellect."

Arora also touched upon the quality of teachers that private institutions produce, and said the system should be able to produce teachers with scientific thinking.

R Ravichander, group president, Business Development (South), Yes Bank, concurring with title of the topic, pointed out that it was private education that had become synonymous with the standards set for current generation of educators to follow.

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