

Aspirations and Higher Education

Recently, I ventured into some rural Schools in Mysore district to talk to school children to know about their aspirations. The School Children responded saying, "I want to be a doctor, an engineer, a police inspector, an IAS officer, a minister, a scientist, a pilot, a cricket player, a teacher, a film actor or a singer. One child even said "I want to join the army", while yet another child said "I want to be a bus driver". A few children said that they wanted to be computer engineers and almost all of these children wanted to move to a city. When I asked them who would take care of their agricultural fields if they all went to the city, they said, their father or their brother would do so. I asked them, why they want to go to a city and their answer was, "we can have a good house, drive a car and visit good hotels and go to other countries". I asked the boy who wanted to join army why he wanted to join the army and he said he would like to protect the nation. They went on giving examples of some other people who had gone to cities and described their life style.

When I asked them, from where they get their information, they all said that they had been watching these on television channels.

I also come from a village. In the 70's, when I was in High School, I recollect that a DDPI from Mysore had once come to our School. He asked a similar question to us, and barring one student, others did not even dare to stand up and respond to his question. I think many of us did not even understand what he was asking. Today children are more communicative and they express their views without any hesitation. DTH technology has really brought a great change in the children's thinking, in the same manner that the internet has brought changes in the behaviour of urban children.

One of my questions to them was, whether they know, what needs to be done to achieve something of significance. They all said that they needed to go to college.

Probably, had I visited some more Schools, I would have heard similar responses. Today, children have high aspirations and meeting their aspirations is a challenge. The Country needs to provide basic necessities like clean water, sanitation, electricity, nutritious food, good schools, good teachers and transport. Otherwise, the aspirations of these young children will remain as dreams.

As these children complete secondary school, they enter into college/university. UGC reports show that during the academic session 2011-2012, the total enrolment in all courses and levels in regular stream stood at 203.27 lakhs including 86.72 lakhs women students, constituting 42.66%. Out of the total students enrolled, 85.87% were in UG, 12.26% in PG, 1.08 in Certificate or Diploma courses and 0.79% were in PhD Programme. Out of the total enrolment of students (203.27 lakhs), 37.09% students were in the Faculty of Arts, followed by Science 18.64% and Commerce 17.57%, thus constituting 73.30% enrolment in just three faculties. The remaining 26.70% of all enrolments was in professional courses. Almost 20 million graduate enter into job markets annually. Out of these graduates, the upper 25% find jobs easily as they are able to meet the expectations of recruiters, the second 25% of the graduates need to undergo additional training to become employable. A majority of the remaining graduates remain either unemployed or underemployed and may have to face unfair situations. Thus, many students who take up college education end up with unfulfilled childhood aspirations and this affects the health of the society we live in. An analysis of this difficult state of affairs indicates that this is the result of unfair interests amongst the stakeholders involved. Poor motivation of teachers, crumbling infrastructure, obsolete teaching and learning methods, lack of interest amongst students, uninformed parents and unfair government policies, all contribute to this wicked situation.

It is important that Students understand and prepare for such a situation at an early stage. They must make every effort to make full use of their time at college to develop a well-rounded personality in addition to acquiring a degree. They must strive to acquire knowledge, basic and advanced practical skills, communication and behavioural skills, meet people, make new friends and make the most of the opportunities that university/college can provide and develop new interests to become well rounded graduates. On the other hand the college/university should create an ecosystem that supports this expectation of students. The institutions should give priority to motivate and inspire the teaching community, introduce contemporary teaching and learning methods, invest in modern teaching and learning infrastructure and provide opportunities to students to participate in well thought out co-curricular and extra –curricular activities that will shape their personality and enhance their comprehensive development. Once the interest of both students and institutions are aligned the ecosystem created will benefit not only the stake holders but lay the foundation for a prosperous nation.

John F. Kennedy, the 35th President America, once said, “Let us think of education as the means of developing our greatest abilities because in each of us there is a private hope and dream which, fulfilled, can be translated into benefit for everyone and greater strength for our nation”. We aim to fulfil the high hopes of aspiring students at M.S. **Ramaiah University of Applied Sciences** to strengthen our nation.

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