

Interview

“Universities Should Focus On Innovation And Entrepreneurship”

Dr. Prashant Bhalla, President, Manav Rachna Educational Institutions talks about disruption in the education sector. In this exclusive with BW Education's **Brij Pahwa**, he also throws light on the need to change our mindset towards education and how to enable Indian students to study in India. He also talks about the dearth of quality faculty problem and the need to focus on a research based education system.

What's the disruption in education?

The first challenge is that in today's competitive world, the kind of practices and the kind of requirements we have seen from the industry are rapidly changing. What we are seeing now is growth of a new private university ecosystem. I think these are the universities which have been quite innovative and they are forthcoming with the integration of the industry. They are open to new ideas and new innovations and lots of emphasis is being given to entrepreneurship. Other than that it's also critical that we should try to build zeal in our students and budding entrepreneurs so that they should be looking at becoming job creators rather than job seekers. Innovation and entrepreneurship is something universities should focus upon and that has been our core focus.

Innovation is something which has given private universities an edge over government ones but students still want to get admissions in government universities. Why?

Traditionally, as a country, we have always focused on degrees rather than skills. So the challenge has always been that our students were not driven by their own passion or their own skill-set but would succumb to the environment around. I think today our society has come out of the same and now we are talking about international curriculums,

comparing our universities with global ones. For example, to set benchmarks in the space and to be truly global, Manav Rachna has more than 47 international collaborations. We also have synergies with industrial corporations. That really helps us in delivering the right curriculum and the right results.

Coming to the other side of the ecosystem, even companies prefer to hire candidates from government rather than private universities. Your comments?

In our case, we are getting

the best companies for placements, but in general, IITs and IIMs do produce the best brains in the country. However, the companies have seen in the past that these prodigies go out of India post studying. Other than that, I personally also feel that government institutions have much more challenges to deal with now. Private universities on the other hand have the flexibility to adapt to the environment.

Many Indian students aspire to go out for higher studies, especially for post-

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graduation, something which tells us about their lack of trust on the Indian education system. How can we prepare our education system to stop this migration?

In fact, students go out for graduation as well, but you are right, more go out of India to pursue higher degrees. In India the biggest

requirement is to provide financial stability to a student post he/she completes their studies. Our gross enrollment ratio stands only at 21-22 percent. Though the government is trying to take it to 30 percent, the industry also needs to come in and pool resources to stabilize the situation.

We do not have a research

based environment, something which also compels students to pursue higher degrees from outside India.

See, as an institution, we focus on research a lot. We encourage students to take up research. We also focus on emerging tech. and courses that are new and futuristic. However, in general, the focus of India's universities was less on re-

come to India and teach. But there is still a long way to go. It is now a lot more about constant learning and reskilling for our teachers because of the advent of new technologies and disruption which we are seeing every day.

Finally, many private universities have come up giving stiff competition to you. How are you maintaining your sta-

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search and more on employability. This is something which made research take a back seat.

There has been a dearth of quality faculty in India and just like students, even teachers have to be reskilled. What is your opinion?

This has always been a challenge, though things have improved in the past. We have a fantastic academic team in place along with industry faculty since many of our courses are industry driven. The government is wanting to support teachers as well and many foreign based faculty wants to

tus quo?

See, Manav Rachna, the name itself is about creating better human beings and we have been benchmarking ourselves with the best universities of the world. We have been closely working with our foreign partners to ensure we bring in the best practices of the world. We do not only focus on academics but overall welfare of the student and hence stick to the original motto of creating better human beings. That is our USP and differentiates us from other private universities in India. ■

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