

A Seminar on

'Quality and Excellence in Higher Education'

Catholic Higher Education Society (CHES)

October 1st, 2011

at

Sadhna Sadan, 1 Tashkant Marg, Allahabad

**By Justice Sunil Ambwani
Judge, Allahabad High Court**

I am honoured to be invited to be the Chief Guest of the inaugural session of this seminar.

1. The importance of education is best described by a famous Chinese proverb, "**If you want to think one year ahead, plant rice, if you want to think 10 years ahead, plant trees. But if you want to think 100 years ahead, give education to people.**"

The best education is a guarantee for durable peace, progress, prosperity, integrity and honesty.

2. The basic objective of higher education is to increase the mental resolving powers of the human mind and to add real value to the human resources to produce scientists, intellectuals, leaders, wealth creators and administrators, who shape the future of our life.

3. 'Higher education' enables public understanding, cultivates public taste and contributes to the nation's well being, as it nurtures and trains each new generation.

4. We are privileged to live during an extraordinary time. The world has passed through a rapid transformation from 'industrial age' to the 'information age' in which key economic resources of the world are no longer capital, labour and raw

materials but rather knowledge, individual innovators and information.

5. The emerging technologies have given more opportunities to explore, convey and create knowledge, as never before. The institutions of higher learning have heavy responsibilities as we go through this transition.

6. In the global economy, we are moving from a hierarchical order to one of interdependence. The countries, which were economic leaders of the world are finding it difficult to maintain their position. A new economic order is fast emerging with economies dependent on each other. China, India and Brazil considered to be heavily burdened with population, have turned it to their advantage and are going to lead the economies. The economies of scale favour the development of large, highly structured institutions.

7. The major concern of today's world is the balancing between social orders; sustainable development of the environment by optimum use of natural resources, and inclusive economic growth.

8. The world is living beyond its means. We are no longer creating enough value to sustain our life style. On the other hand there is poverty, malnutrition and unemployment. The health care in both developed and developing countries requires new thinking. The benefit of scientific knowledge in medicine is not shared by those, who pay for the research.

9. We are living in a fast changing political order. The surviving autocracies and dictatorships are dwindling. The democracies are under great strain. The people are finding it difficult to meet the challenge of governance by a few families

or individuals sitting on top, for decades altogether. The corruption has affected vitals of the democratic order.

10. In this age of transformation, in which slowly and gradually a new economic and socio-political order is taking shape, the higher education assumes great importance. **We have to cross over from knowledge based societies, to the era of making use of the knowledge for learning.**

11. **The higher education is no longer concentrated on creating knowledge. It now requires rigorous mastery of subject matter under expert guidance; honing conceptual skills that explore meaning from data; promote healthy skepticism that tests reality against multiple points of view; nourish individual creativity and encourage exploration; support collaboration; increase interdependence and interdisciplinary approach provoking a journey of discovery, and to energise the opportunity to contribute to the total of what we know and what we can do.**

12. The two means of higher education namely instruction and research are no longer the final destination. It is not enough to simply transfer knowledge to students. The young people require knowledge with skills through which they can draw from it, throughout their career. We must prepare them not to be just professional scholars but to embark on lifetime of learning and discovery.

13. The higher education should create opportunity of personal creativity and achievements. Once we have thousands of ideas to harvest, we can have the chance to create second renaissance. It will represent, rebirth and revival of learning and culture unleashed by new technologies. It will bridge the gap between art and science and will signify the emergence of integrated

environment for instruction and research. The persons responsible for higher education should prepare themselves for these challenges.

14. Professor Yash Pal in his report of 'The Committee to Advise on Renovation and Rejuvenation of Higher Education' has emphasised to end the isolation of the colleges and universities, who have excelled in providing opportunity of higher education such as Central Universities; IITs and IIMs. They should share the role of leaders, and should show way to others. Stand-alone single disciplined institutions should try to broaden themselves to provide a more wholesome education to their students. He recommended a 'National Commission for Higher Education and Research', to be the apex body with Councils, for different educational models to work, under its umbrella. The central institutions should further be given autonomy and a chance to fly. The motivation and resources should come from all over the country. The Councils should not act as Czars. The autonomy of the Universities should be respected without adhering to an unproductive uniformity instead of being carbon copy of each other under the guidance of UGC or councils. Educational institutions should be allowed to grow on their own like different species of trees, growing to their full potential in a forest.

15. Dr. Sam Pitroda, Chairman, of the National Knowledge Commission, in his letter to the Prime Minister dated 29th November, 2006 recommended expansion, excellence and inclusion in the Higher Education System. He has suggested creation of 1500 Universities nationwide enabling gross enrollment ratio of at least 15% by 2015, as against 7% today. He has suggested an Independent Regulatory Authority for Higher Education (IRAHE), to be established by Act of Parliament to be

the only agency authorised to accord degree granting power to the higher education institutions; monitoring standards and settling disputes; applying norms to public and private institutions, authority for licensing accreditation agencies, redefining the disbursement of grants and maintenance of public institutions. The functions of AICTE, MCI and BCI may be performed by the regulatory authority.

16. Dr. Sam Pitroda suggested increase on spending on higher education from 1.5% of GDP out of total of 6% of GDP for education; drawing up norms and parameters for universities to use their available land as source of finance; allowing university to decide the level of fees to meet atleast 20% of the total expenditure, subject to free waiver plus scholarships. He suggests that the universities should not be penalised by the UGC for the resources raised from higher fees, through matching deductions from their grant-in-aid. Permissions to be granted for philanthropic contributions, alumni contributions, and licensing fees. Dr. Pitroda had also suggested for establishing atleast 50 National Universities to provide education of higher standards with strong linkages between teaching and research; universities and industry, and universities and research laboratories. The National Universities should be department based, and shall not have any affiliated colleges.

17. A number of suggestions have been given to achieve excellence in Higher Education such as restructuring of curricula at least once in three years; annual examination with continuous internal assessment; transition to a course credit system where degrees are granted on the basis of converting a requisite number of credits from different courses, which provides students with choice. Converting universities to become hub of research; the

reforms in the structuring of governance of universities that preserve autonomy with accountability. The appointments of Vice Chancellors must be freed from direct or indirect interventions on the part of governments for these should be based on research processes and peer judgment alone. The size and composition of University courts, Academic Councils and Executive Councils should be reduced to speed up decision making processes. He recommends smaller universities, responsive to change and management.

18. Foreign universities are knocking at the doors of India to take over higher education. It is necessary to formulate appropriate policies for entry of these institutions into India, and the promotion of Indian institutions abroad, ensuring a level playing field for foreign and domestic institutions within the country.

19. There are many more ideas, which need to be implemented to improve the quality and excellence in higher education.

I hope the deliberations made in this seminar will be useful, and beneficial for all the stake holders.

Thank you.
