

FOOD FOR THOUGHT



It is the endeavour of the educational institution to impart only the best to the students and inculcate in them the very basics of education so that they stop running after grades in the long run. It is also important for students to choose their institute with utmost care, says **RABIYA SOOD**

The dominating force behind most of the prominent educational systems in the world today is a renewed focus on developing the intellect of their students and, in turn, nurturing generational leaders for a variety of roles in the society.

While this may sound a utopian concept of education, it is, in fact, the most pervasive thought of real education. However, increasingly education has been looked upon as a sole means of finding a lucrative job/career, perhaps in a way dismissing the very basis of education. Patience is what lacks in today's times as every student aspires to make a quick buck overnight.

Education is an inward journey of an individual; a journey of understanding your character, talent and determination, rather than merely acquiring high grades. We are all students and the only way to understand that is to remember the process of learning never ends because at every step we are constantly understanding our environment better and moulding ourselves accordingly.

An educational institution possesses great power and responsibility in shaping the future of its students. Considering a student, on an average, spends over 60 per cent of his time there; the environment of an institution subtly rubs off on its students. A superior institution realises this and understands that its basic responsibility towards its students is to deliver only the best to them. Furthermore, it needs to first understand the skills they possess, their strengths and weaknesses and then give them an opportunity to develop themselves for a wholesome educational process.

If even after all this the end result is getting the best job, let us look at what a typical employer wants. When you are interviewing with an employer what is the first

impression they get of you? It is not the depth of knowledge that you have — which is hard to gauge accurately at a brief interview — rather it is your persona and the way you conduct yourself which leaves a mark. Employers look for well-read and thoughtful candidates. While having a depth in one field will give you a clear cut advantage, it is often hard for a fresh graduate to possess that.

So how does a student with ordinary grades stand a chance in the super competitive system? A focus on knowledge, be it in any form — newspapers, magazines, case studies, journals — can help make a lasting impression.

If we break this down simply and again in a utopian sense, why do we really go to college? The answer is simple — to acquire knowledge. The subjects we are taught are just a specialised form of knowledge delivered to us by a faculty well-versed in them. In some ways, as a student you are forced to gain that knowledge. It is easier to sit in a classroom with no distractions than to self-discipline into drowning and skimming through the vast amount of literature available. In the long run, however, he who cultivates this habit of reading and increasing the self awareness of the world around wins the race.

But does it end there? While cultivating the art of reading will give you an edge over the rest, how do we cultivate a wholesome personality by the end of the academic years?

This is where the role of a quality educational institution stems in. A good educational institution understands a gap between where a student is and where he

needs to be. It understands that the years spent therein involve a process of not only providing knowledge but also grooming and shaping, so that the end result is wholesome product, bridging the existing gap.

This is a complicated methodology, often hard to evaluate. While an option of various clubs and societies will help students develop their overall personality, the communications and interpersonal interactions that these provide gives a student exposure to the real

world increasing their confidence. In academics through a culmination of case studies, guest lectures from industry professionals, exchange trips and summer internships help groom a student. The faculty of such schools is in sync with the global scenario and up-to-date on the latest events. The way such schools are managed and the atmosphere present therein is an example of supreme management styles.

The culture of such institutions is to constantly be in line with the global standards of education and provide value added services beyond the regular class interface. And in the end, all this knowledge is disseminated keeping in mind a value-based education to inculcate a sense of ethics in their students. In today's globalised world, a good institution is one which does not punish you for not getting a 95 per cent, but grooms your total personality and inculcates in you the relevant managerial skills, thus providing you with quality education.

So, what is it that a fresh student should look for and what should be his/her strategy? First, gather as much as knowledge as you can and pick a field that interests you. Then, choose an institute beyond the traditional ranking system, based on the value added services available outside of the classroom teaching. It is very important to not go on face value and be misled by the hundreds of options available; rather a campus visit is a must.

In the end we must ask the question; do we fit in here? Will I have metamorphosed into a well-read, educated person with the confidence to take on to anything after I pass out from here?

The obvious choice is to go for the institution that best meets the criteria and environment which cultivates excel-

Protect wetlands: Jairam

Jairam Ramesh, Minister of State for Environment & Forests, launched Indira Gandhi National Open University's (IGNOU) 'Appreciation Programme on Sustainable Management of Wetlands'. The programme has been developed by IGNOU's Chair for Sustainable Development (CSD), headed by the eminent agricultural scientist, Prof MS Swaminathan. The Minister remarked that conserving wetlands should assume the role of a 'People's Movement' so that people can lead more fuller lives, right now. "Most wetlands in the country are being lost for more highways, sewage and dumping grounds. The Ministry of Environment and Forests has uploaded the draft guidelines for protection of wetlands on its website. These regulations will be notified in the next three months. The Ministry is also in the process of mapping all wetlands in the country and there are plans to open a university on Environment and Sustainability in the near future," the Minister added.

About 10 per cent of India is covered by wetlands, 25 per cent of the bird population lives here. Unfortunately, wetlands are getting degraded fast due to man-made and natural causes. Yet, most people don't know what wetlands are and why they are important. The 'Appreciation Programme on Sustainable Management of Wetlands' has been launched to fill in this gap.

This programme is being offered in the

online mode. It provides awareness about the importance of wetlands, why they are disappearing, restoration efforts and sustainable management. And provides strategies and approaches to link local communities with ecological security of the wetlands and shows ways for sustainable management of this fast disappearing ecosystem. The programme is open to graduates from any discipline. It can be completed in a minimum period of one month and a maximum period of six months. It has four credits and the medium of instruction is English. Speaking on the launch, Prof Swaminathan commented: "What is needed to conserve the environment is education, social motivation and regulation. Regulation alone will not do the job. In this context, the Chair for Sustainable Development, IGNOU, is working on the launch of a new programme on the biodiversity of river Ganga. We have got the best people with a passion for their subjects, for designing these programmes. We shall soon also be launching a PG programme in Sustainability Science."

Prof VN Rajasekharan Pillai, VC, IGNOU, remarked: "IGNOU's Chair for Sustainable Development has emerged as a model for all the Universities in the country. There is an urgent need to link education with development and we were the first Indian University to start sustainability science as a discipline."

PG in Disability Psychology

Recognising the need of trained manpower in the disability field, IGNOU will now offer a PG Diploma in Rehabilitation Psychology (PGDRP) in face-to-face mode, in collaboration with Vision Institute of Advanced Studies, Delhi, which is approved by the Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI).

Dr Hemlata, Director, National Centre for Disability Studies, IGNOU, said: "PG Diploma courses in Disability Psychology will help learners to understand the psychology of disabled people in a better way such as they can provide effective rehabilitation to them. The Right to Education laws and the philosophy of inclusive education will also see an increased number of disabled students going to schools, which will require more teachers trained in disability psychology. This certainly creates numerous career opportunities."

On completion of the programme, the candidates shall get registration from the RCI after which they would be entitled to work in the Special Education field which is mandatory pre-condition. The candidates will get the BA and MA degree in Psychology. The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has laid special emphasis on the commencement of academic programmes for the welfare of this long neglected field. The National Centre for Disability Studies under IGNOU has been established keeping in mind the broad objectives of the Government and facilitate and serve this field. The admissions are open till July 31. However, the seats are only 20 and it's the first time that a need based programme is being commenced in the Capital to fulfill the needs of Special Education and disability sector.

Students can get further details from 9311305289, 9311305286 or by logging in on www.visioninstitute.in. The Vision Institute of Advanced Studies is also offering PG Diploma in Guidance & Counselling.

MA entrance on August 8

The last date of submission of forms for regular classes of BA and MA programmes of IGNOU was July 25. The entrance exam will be held on August 8, 2010, followed by group discussions and personal interviews.

These are BA in Applied Sign Language Studies, Preparatory Programme for Deaf students, MA in Gandhi and Peace Studies, Extension & Development Studies, Translation Studies, Labour and Development, Social & Anthropology Historical Perspective, Gender and Development Studies, Women and Gender Studies. There is no entrance test for these programmes.

Programmes offered with entrance test includes, MA in Social Work (philanthropy), Journalism & Mass Communication, Electronic Media Production & Management, Life Sciences.

IGNOU in collaboration with educational institutes is offering the following programmes with limited number of seats. The education imparted draws both the strengths of formal education and multi-modal programme delivery.

BTech in Aerospace Engineering, BA in (3D Animation and Visual Effects, Fashion Design, Fashion Merchandising & Production, Textile Design with specialization in Woven/Knitwear, Fashion Communication, Apparel Design and Merchandising), Diploma in Computer Generated Imagery, Certificate Programme in Digital Film Making, Executive MBA (Hospitality Management), Certificate in (Firemanship, Entrepreneurship Skill Development, Cosmetology, Hospital Administrative Assistanceship), Diploma (Fire Safety Management, Entrepreneurship Skill Development), PG Diploma in Security operation, PG Certificate in Security Operation.

The prescribed booklet and prospectus can be obtained from the Registrar, SRD, IGNOU, Maidan Garhi, New Delhi-68 by post.

