

“Courses on rural marketing and management have high potential and opportunities”

Dr Rajeev R Thakur, director of Jaipuria Institute of Management, Noida believes that the future of India lies in rural areas despite high rate of urbanisation. He describes, “Be it taking products to rural customers, or developmental projects, infrastructure, agriculture, agri-based industry, traditional industry, rural entrepreneurship including women force and leveraging technology to exploit the large potential of rural India, in every respect rural India is a force to reckon with and courses like rural marketing and rural management are the critical courses with high potential and opportunities.”

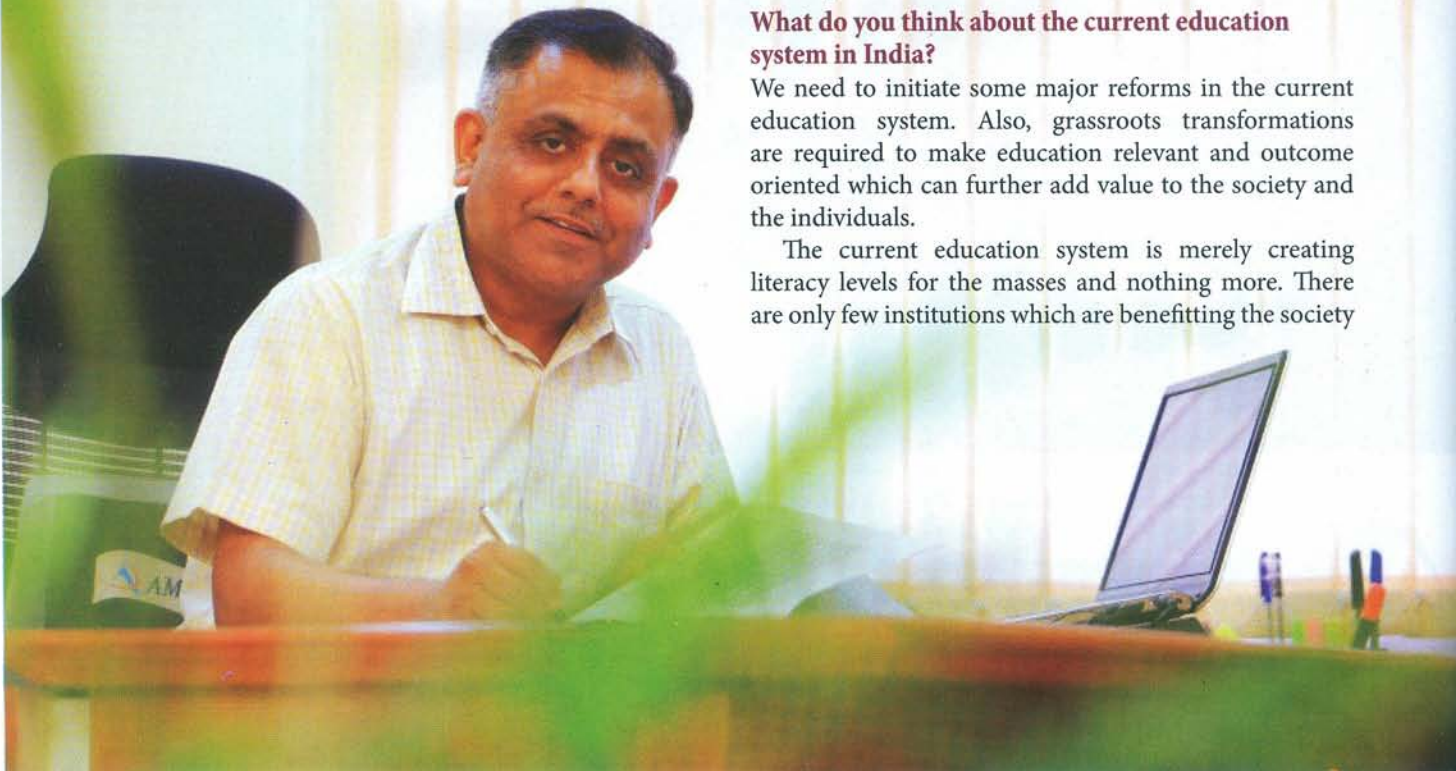
A post-graduate in Economics and MBA from IIT-Delhi, Thakur has worked as professor of strategic management and international business strategy at Institute of Management Technology (IMT), Ghaziabad and Director at AKGIM, Ghaziabad.

Excerpts:

What do you think about the current education system in India?

We need to initiate some major reforms in the current education system. Also, grassroots transformations are required to make education relevant and outcome oriented which can further add value to the society and the individuals.

The current education system is merely creating literacy levels for the masses and nothing more. There are only few institutions which are benefitting the society





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in terms of quality output-or adding value to the society.

While everyone talks of quality, but that also needs to be defined in terms of desired outcomes of quality education.

Capacity building should be the key goal, creating a work force or a community which has a researching and questioning mind along with an entrepreneurial mind. And for this, the system has to reorient itself in terms of its design, content and delivery. Duplicating or drawing concepts and models from here and there would not help unless and until we connect our education with the grassroots and with what the society needs.

Some of the major challenges that the education sector is facing includes: raising standards, developing education work force, improving the learning environment and delivering services to the institutions, etc., What do you think can be the long-term solutions to all these?

I think, first and foremost the intent has to be clearly outlined. We need to define it on the basis of 4Ws and 1H – When, What, Whom, Where, and How.

This should have acceptance at the country or the society level and leadership or the government has to be committed to the cause.

Instead of first talking of international benchmarks, barring few sections of the education system, broadly one must address how to improve the operational and delivery part, once a relevant model is decided upon which would add value to the society and the individual.

While good teachers are required, more than that their commitment and honesty towards the profession is the most sought-after.

In the last few years, there has been a sudden rise in the number of new management institutes. However, a large number of them are shutting down. What do you think are the reasons behind this?

When we all know that the institutes have shut down and are shutting down even today, where the reasons are quite known and obvious, I feel we should look for an answer rather than counting reasons alone.

First and foremost, all institutes should develop a foresight for the future developments and scenarios in the context of what way would be the economy, society and business move globally, regionally and nationally.

In the times to come, a number of new sectors and businesses would emerge requiring new set of skills. The existing sectors would expand their scope in locations and activities which again would need different skills.

Learning from the mistakes of the past, institutes need to understand what exactly the needs of the industry and society are. The same skills sets should be integrated with the learning outcomes of the programme curriculum and courses. Only quality value addition can help transform students into a ready material for the industry. Even today when the industry is undergoing a shakeout phase, those institutes who have been able to add

value, they command the trust of aspiring students.

Do you think that regulatory provisions such as UGC norms are a hindrance when it comes to hiring faculty? There is this school of thought that says that “Let me have good faculty, even if they don’t meet the UGC norms”. Do you subscribe to this line of thought?

Any good B-school with right intent is no way restricted by norms laid down by UGC which tries to ensure certain minimum standards. Institutes like us engage with industry experts and professionals on a regular basis and in so many ways to impart practical knowledge to our students. We also provide every opportunity to our faculty members to collaborate with industry and do research and consultancy which brings in lots of new

insights into the class room. Our pedagogy takes our students on field and provides scopes for experiential learning. All these well compensate for any limitations caused by UGC norms of hiring a regular faculty who is not a PhD. I would rather say that B-schools must invest in good amount in attracting the best of the talents into the industry which is far from wanting except for few good B-schools.

Do you think niche courses like rural marketing and rural management have future in India?

Yes, very much. I think the future of India also lies in rural areas despite high rate of urbanisation. Be it taking products to rural customers, or developmental projects, infrastructure, agriculture, agri-based industry, traditional industry, rural entrepreneurship including women force and leveraging technology to exploit the large potential of rural India, in every respect rural India is a force to reckon with and courses like rural marketing and rural management are the critical courses with high potential and opportunities.

What is of course required is sensitisation and awareness of the youth who prefer to work in metros and urban areas without realising that a high career prospect lies in the rural areas of India.

Having a long experience in the field of academics, how do you see the changes which have taken place in the Indian education system in the due course and how do you see the growth in the time to come?

A major change I can see is the dissatisfaction amongst youth in majority with the type of education which is available to them. As far management or technical education is concerned, similar dissatisfaction is noticed amongst the industry and

employers with regards to incompatible skills in the young recruits coming out of institutions.

No more simple degrees are relevant or satisfying students. As highlighted in the beginning education should be outcome oriented with a special focus on capacity building amongst youth which creates employability and skills to perform and contribute to their dreams and earn livelihood at the same time

How educational institutions can play its role in nation-building? What according to you is the success mantra for the new generation?

By putting right kind of programme with right curriculum and delivery which can build capacity and skill in its student's institutions can true contribute towards the future of a nation.

The success mantra of today's generation is hard work, perseverance and efforts towards building a thinking mind and being aware about the surroundings and the latest developments.

Relationships and networking is another key issue in the global world and so is important to be flexible and open. Value and ethics is another important area. Plus they cannot be kept apart from the ground realities of the Indian society and markets. ▶

What is required is sensitisation and awareness of the youth who prefer to work in metros and urban areas without realising that a high career prospect lies in the rural areas of the country

