

50 Leaders Changing Indian Education

These are the best and worst times for India's community of educationists and educators, principals and teachers included. On the positive side, perhaps more than ever before in the history of the Indian subcontinent, public interest in education and its life-sustaining social and private benefits is at its zenith. On the negative, there are the Central and state governments which like bulls in a china shop are running amok in Indian education interfering with private education institutions and piling on ill-conceived populist legislation which dilutes teaching-learning standards and learning outcomes in the country's 1.26 million government schools, 80,000 private schools, 31,000 colleges and 611 universities. It is no exaggeration to state that at stake is the globally competitive capability and future of the next generation — 550 million children and youth enrolled in India's crumbling, rapidly obsolescing and dysfunctional institutions of primary, secondary, higher and vocational education.



Against this sombre backdrop, heavy responsibility has devolved upon the country's beleaguered minority of bona fide educationists and educators to positively influence public policy and simultaneously guide their own institutions of learning through treacherous waters and currents. This responsibility is not only of education philanthropists and private education entrepreneurs ('edupreneurs') who have "established and administer educational institutions of their choice" — a fundamental right conferred upon linguistic and religious minorities by the Constitution of India (Article 30 (1)) and expanded to all citizens in the Supreme Court's landmark verdict in T.M.A Pai Foundation vs. State of Karnataka & Ors (2002) — but has also devolved upon vice chancellors, faculty and administrators of public universities, and principals and teachers of the country's government schools. They need to practice leadership skills to nurture institutions under their care into centres of excellence and protect them from the populist leveling down efforts of rampaging politicians and bureaucrats.

Contrary to popular belief, such exemplary education leaders and visionaries are a growing minority within Indian education. After a hiatus of three years, EducationWorld presents thumbnail biographies of 50 education leaders who are struggling within a hostile regulatory environment to raise teaching-learning standards in India's beleaguered preschool, school and higher education institutions.

Lt. Gen (Retd). Arjun Ray, VSM, PVSM, chief executive of the Indus Trust (estb. 2003) and Indus International Schools (Bangalore, Hyderabad and Pune). An alumnus of the Staff College, Camberley, UK, and the National Defence College, New Delhi, Ray served the Indian Army with distinction for 38 years before he retired in 2002. In his last assignment before retirement, he commanded the newly raised 14 Corps in Ladakh where to win the hearts and minds of the people and ward off the threat of insurgency in this sensitive border area, he conceptualised the education-driven Operation Sadbhavna (goodwill). Under this programme, he promoted 13 primary schools, 11 women's empowerment and 60 adult education centres along the line of control in Jammu and Kashmir.



Gen. Ray's initiatives in education which were widely acclaimed in India and abroad, attracted the interest of Kumar Malavalli, a Silicon Valley (USA)-based IT tycoon of Indian origin, who invited him to promote the high-end, IBO-affiliated Indus International School, Bangalore (IIS-B) under the aegis of the Indus Trust. IIS-B was not only constructed in record time but over the past seven years has quickly established a global reputation as an excellent IB K-XII academy. In the EW-C for India's Most Respected Schools Survey 2011, IIS-B was ranked the country's second most respected international school behind Woodstock, Mussoorie (estb. 1852). Since then, the trust has promoted Indus International schools in Pune and Hyderabad with the three schools boasting an aggregate enrolment of 1,700 students from over 50 countries around the world. Moreover, in an exceptional initiative, the trust has promoted a parallel free school on the Indus International, Bangalore campus which offers the IB primary years curriculum to over 300 children.

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