

RE-IMAGINING EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

BY JUSTICE R. C. LAHOTI

FORMER CHIEF JUSTICE OF INDIA

ON OCTOBER 18, 2010

at

MUSSOORIE – PRINCIPALS CONCLAVE

Respected Shri Sharad Agrawalji, MD, EISML

Shri Shantanu Prakashji, CEO Educomp Solutions

Respected Chairpersons of Educational Trusts / Societies,

Directors of education, Principals, Members of Educational Administration and Management,
(in short the Leaders in the field of Educational Institutions)

(I see you as field-architects of futuristic education)

Dignitaries, Ladies and Gentleman.

1. I deem it a matter of great privilege addressing this Conference of eminent educationists on a subject of vital significance – “Re-imagining Educational Leadership for the 21st Century”.
2. We have just now listened to two very scintillating speeches, telling us why we are here and giving us a visionary perspective of what is the road ahead.
3. The aim of the conference, I am told, is to address such issues as the leadership confronts when running schools in the present scenario and also to ensure that each participant is able to take home something inspirational to give the teachers and next generation of pupils. I hold Ma'am Mahruksingh in high esteem because of very special qualities of meritorious educational leadership which she possesses and because she is one who believes in 'speaking not in words but by deeds'. She is the one under whose dynamic leadership Mothers' IN School of Delhi became number one school of Delhi. She beautifully sums up the purpose of this conference in a very affectionate e-mail to me. She writes, it is to focus on redefining and broadening the

school leaders' roles and responsibilities. Why do we want to do it? As she has written to me:

- i) to raise the profile of our educational institutions;
- ii) to creatively impact young lives;
- iii) to sustain excellence and revitalize the present system of education.

4. The purposes spell out the challenges. The educational institutions are already there and more will come up; but, their profile stands in need of being raised. India has the largest youth-power of the world. But it is necessary to channelize and vitalize it by creating a 'creative impact' on it. The excellence in education and educational institutions needs to be sustained where it is; to be inculcated where it is not; and, in any case, the present system of education needs the dose of revitalizing – the concerned educationists feel so.
5. This message from Ma'am Mahruksingh set rolling my ball of thinking. Coincidentally, I was reading a beautiful monograph authored by Debashish Chatterjee, who has been a professor in Indian Institute of Management in Lucknow and presently, as my information goes, is Director of Institute of Management in Kozikode. The book raises a simple question: What is the purpose of life?, and provides an answer as simple as the question is - The purpose of life is to live a life of purpose. The name of Manjunath may be alive in your memory. He was a student of Debashish. Once Manjunath (as an alumni) called on his teacher and the teacher posed a question to him- If livelihood is for life what life is for? At that moment Manjunath could not answer. He took up a career for earning his livelihood and became an ordinary Govt. servant. But voluntarily he assumed to himself the extraordinary duty of exposing the oil mafia of Bihar who were mercilessly and regularly cheating the poor oil consumers to whom nobody would listen. Manjunath was rewarded by six bullets thrust into his body on a November night. Manjunath had finally answered the question of his teacher: if livelihood is for life; the life is for the country. The Preface to the book begins with a few words which have become a quote – "a bird in the sky does not sing because it wants to win a musical competition. It sings because it has discovered a freedom song inside its own heart."

6. I have quoted this inspiring story and its moral for a purpose. Leaders are not always born; they are also made. They are made when an urge to lead, with a purpose to achieve, is born in the heart so naturally as the urge to sing in a bird. The only difference today is that that urge in the leaders whom I am addressing need not be born; it is there, it needs only to be discovered and charged to swing into action. May be a little vitalizing is needed and that is what the organizers of this conclave have in their mind as the object.
7. I propose to deal with very briefly (1) The present scenario of education especially in Indian context; (2) the trends in education, 20th century leading to 21st century; (3) the challenges and; (4) how to meet the challenges?

Education and teachers

8. I do not wish to attempt any definition of what education is, for you all know it better than me. The monumental work Grolier's Encyclopedia (Vol.7.p.59), states that concept of education was born out of men to satisfy their curiosity and aesthetic impulses. To achieve these objectives people need to acquire reliable knowledge and to think systematically. Over the course of human history education has appeared in many forms, both formalized and informal. Major thinkers have always recognized the educational value of intellectual exploration and of concrete experimentation. Teachers have worked with schools of thought, cults, monasteries, and other types of organizations to shape desired convictions, knowledge and behavior. The Encyclopedia records philosophical and religious leaders such as Buddha, Confucius, Pythagoras, Jesus Christ, Moses, Muhammad, and Karl Marx as great educationists who instructed their disciples through informal educations and thereby shaped the world and its destiny too.
9. What sculpture is to a block of marble, education is to the soul - said Joseph Addison, an eminent English Essayist. It has come to be accepted that knowledge is power. Epictetus in his *Discourses* mentions "only educated are free". Plato said, "the direction in which education starts a man will determine his future life". The purpose

of this Conference is to remind the teachers that the times may have changed but the significance of the role of teachers in shaping the society, its culture, its behaviour, determining the quality of life which the mankind would enjoy for the time being and also in the times to come has not changed. Many a vices with which we find the world of today struggling with, and the humanity ailing from, can be removed and got over only with the help of education. If we need a better world to live in, if we are keen on our children and grand children to not to face and be surrounded by the evils which we are fighting against, the solution lies in education. If we can improve the quality of the education which is imparted to the children of today, the scenario would change only after 20 years when the child of today would take over from us. It is by improving the quality of education that we can change our own future. The leaders of formal educational institutions have to be conscious of their role as teachers. Additionally they have to realize that they are teachers of teachers, the awareness of which duty is as paramount as the administration of the institution or institutions which they head.

TRENDS IN THE INDIAN EDUCATION SECTOR:-

10. Globally, India has one of the lowest enrollment and highest dropout ratios, translating into net enrollment levels among the lowest in the world. There are about 1,025,000 schools in India but not enough to meet the demand in terms of both quality and quantity. At 361m, India has the largest population globally in the K12 (school) age group (5.5x USA's K12 population). Despite a mere 37% of the K12 age group net enrolled on school rosters, private spends on K12 schools stand at an astounding \$20bn – which makes the segment the largest within IES. The large market can be explained by a consistent shift towards private schools – catalyzed by the absence of quality public schools and growing awareness about importance of quality education as also increasing ability and willingness of Indians to pay. Indian parents save money for their kids' education and believe that private sector provides better faculty, environment and stimulus necessary for quality education.
11. Increasing globalization: With increased trade of services and goods across leading to invisible boundaries, education too is becoming global with common skill needs in

the industries of the world. With the common skills needs, the curriculum, content, technology is also becoming globalized. To impart global curriculum, the teaching pedagogies have also evolved creating place for global exchange of faculty across the globe.

12. Education, to begin with and especially in India, was motivated by charity. The 20th century witnesses the teachers turning into professionals and the activity of education turning into commerce. In the later part of the century the education has come to be recognised as industry. At the opening of 21st century, education is being taken over by corporates with international stakeholders stepping in.
13. I feel that in many ways contact and personal relationship between a learner and trainer is vanishing. There are numerous number of distance learning institutions that are opening up. Many higher educational institutions offering distance education courses have started to leverage the Internet to improve their program's reach and quality. However, one has to be careful about using technology in the right way such that it does not take away the effectiveness of imparting knowledge and powerful impact of dialogue between learner and trainer. At the University of the Philippines Open University, course materials are still predominantly print based but online tutorials are becoming a convenient alternative to face-to-face tutorials especially for students unwilling or unable to go to UPOU's various physical learning centres. In Korea, where infrastructure is among the best in the world, and government has put considerable financial and other resources behind an ambitious ICT-based re-tooling of its educational system, challenges to online education persist. Policymakers and educators in South Korea continue to grapple with issues of quality management, open access, "degree seeking not knowledge gain" students and the appropriateness of the instructional model for learners.
14. In education many a thing have changed though there are a few basics which should not change. The basic ideal of education is that the teacher whatever else he may be but above all else, he has to be a friend to his students, to his colleagues and to the human being at large. The true teacher is a friend; also a sculptor, a moulder, a nurturer who draws out the best in his students. It is a common grievance in the

circles of education that the students are no longer what they used to be. The teachers and administrators have to do a little of soul searching; are they what they used to be? The students are changing, it is true; the teachers and administrators have to try to adapt themselves to the needs of the times, the needs of the students. There are some things on which we can not afford to compromise: that is, our commitment to our ideals, our sense of dedication to the profession and the institution to which we belong; our loving care and concern for those young pupil who are entrusted to our care.

15. The concept of 'teacher-less class – rooms' is coming up. It is possible for an interactive computer to give the students all that knowledge which the teacher can – and may be much better – and certainly without the strict discipline and eccentricities of a teacher.
16. With greatest respect to the technological advances, in the humble opinion of a person like me, it is difficult to swallow if this can be education in the true sense. Instructions may be offered through the virtual class-rooms; information may be made available through the computers, but teaching is much more than this. Teaching in its true sense is communicating – a process in which the personality of the teacher interacts with personality of the students. One can go to a library and read hundreds of books; one can collect limitless data from the internet; recorded CDs can be listened to for lessons; but still the question would remain unanswered – can any of these compensate for the living and moving presence of a good teacher?
17. The new technologies shall have to be adopted as teaching aids. It is indispensable and unavoidable. But who will compensate for the heart and soul of the teacher ever committed to the noble ideals which puts our teachers in the position of the Guru, a preceptor, who teaches by words as well as by personal examples. There is no parallel in the world of our heritage which accords to the teacher and elevated status of the Guru – the remover of the darkness – the harbinger of the light!.
18. I am reminded of the words of Swami Vivekananda, the greatest educationist of his times – 'he alone teaches who has something to give; for teaching is not talking,

teaching is not imparting doctrines, it is communicating....' All teaching implies giving and taking, the teacher gives and the taught receives; the former must have something to give and the other must be open to receive.¹

19. Value based → commercial education → career/skill + value based: There was a shift in the industry from value based education to commercialization of education. With Indian economy booming industry demands a huge workforce across all sectors which has led to the need of career and skill oriented education right from the school level. As the industry has evolved, several institutions also realize the need to instill ethics and values in the kids which become an invisible pillar to the formation of sound society.
20. All great educationists including Swami Vivekanand, Arvind, Dr. Radha Krishnan, Dr Zakir Hussain have minced no words in stating that the primary object of education is the formation of character. The objects of education are: (1) formation of character; (2) development of personality, strong body and strong mind; (3) impart in knowledge; and (4) equipping the student with capacity to earn his livelihood or sustenance. These four objects are placed serially in the order of their primacy. Unfortunately over the years , mostly because of shift in emphasis from spiritualism to materialism-an urge for easy acquisition of means of worldly pleasures, the order in which they are placed has just been reversed. The educational institutions of the day guarantee successful career as the motivating factor for the parents and students to attract them unto themselves but the regrettable part is that it has become the sole object of the institutions. No wonder George. M. Trevelyan was provoked to say in *English Social History*-“Education....has produced a vast population able to read but unable to distinguish what is worth reading”, and the great scholar and humorist Mark Twain to make a cynical observation – “soap and education are not as sudden as a massacre, but they are more deadly in the long run”². Authoritative and more sober, Rabindranath Tagore is bound to be. He said³,”We are provided with buildings and books and other magnificent burdens calculated to suppress our mind. All this has cost us money and also our fine ideas, while our intellectual vacancy has been crammed with what is described in official reports as education. In fact we have bought our spectacles at the expense of our eyesight (p.177)..... Our educated

community is not a cultured community, but a community of qualified candidates (p.180).”

21. Private schools are working on evolving and improving their teaching delivery mechanisms by going beyond the traditional chalk & talk. Multimedia in schools uses digital educational content and infrastructure solutions as a teaching aid in classrooms by using audio and visuals means across various subjects. The effective integration of ICTs into the educational system is a complex, multifaceted process that involves not just technology—indeed, given enough initial capital, getting the technology is the easiest part!—but also curriculum and pedagogy, institutional readiness, teacher competencies, and long-term financing, among others.
22. **What are the Challenges for administrators and Educationists and education management and how to address the challenges?**
23. Will technology replace teachers and trainers? The answer is a resounding NO! In fact, with the introduction of ICTs in the classroom, the teacher’s role in the learning process becomes even more critical. What can and should change is the kind of role that the teacher plays.
24. The role of students, in turn, also expands. And since technology and globalization can open up the classroom to the outside world, the community can also play a new role in the classroom. As learning shifts from the “teacher-centered model” to a “learner-centered model”, the teacher becomes less the sole voice of authority and more the facilitator, mentor and coach—from “sage on stage” to “guide on the side”.
25. The teacher’s primary task becomes to teach the students how to ask questions and pose problems, formulate hypotheses, locate information and then critically assess the information found in relation to the problems posed. And since ICT-enhanced learning is a new experience even for the teachers, the teachers become co-learners and discover new things along with their students.

26. Additionally, it is not uncommon to see students in an ICT-enabled classroom assume both formal and informal roles as teachers of their peers and younger students, sometimes even of their own teachers. Teachers and students from different schools, subject-matter experts, parents, community and business leaders, politicians, and other interested parties also become involved in the learning process—as resource persons, critics, mentors, and cheerleaders. They also comprise a public, and hopefully critical, audience for students’ work published on the Web or through other media. Yet many teachers are reluctant to use ICTs, especially computers and the Internet. Poor software design, effectiveness of computers in improving learning outcomes, lack of administrative support, increased time and effort needed to learn the technology and how to use it for teaching, and the fear of losing their authority in the classroom as it becomes more learner-centered. These are all issues that must be addressed by both pre-service teacher education and in-service teacher professional development programs if schools and other educational institutions are to fully exploit the potential of computers and the Internet as educational tools.
27. Globalization and technological change—processes that have accelerated in tandem over the past fifteen years—have created a new global economy “powered by technology, fueled by information and driven by knowledge.” The emergence of this new global economy has serious implications for the nature and purpose of educational institutions. As the half-life of information continues to shrink and access to information continues to grow exponentially, schools cannot remain mere venues for the transmission of a prescribed set of information from teacher to student over a fixed period of time. Rather, schools must promote “learning to learn,” : i.e., the acquisition of knowledge and skills that make possible continuous learning over the lifetime. “The illiterate of the 21st century,” according to futurist Alvin Toffler, “will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn.”
28. The Delegates in this conclave! You shall have to develop an aggressive self-confidence in yourself by being conscious of and realizing the heavy responsibility which lies on your shoulders in shaping the society. Sir Winston Churchill, in his capacity as Prime Minister made a very candid and bold evaluation (recorded by

himself in *My early Life*, Ch-2),” Headmasters⁴ have powers at their disposal with which Prime Ministers have never yet been invested.” And, Richard Nixon had emphasized in one of his Presidential Speeches⁵, “We must develop teaching scholars, not teaching technicians. Moreover, we must give teachers that salary, prestige and backing to enable us to attract the best minds to this honoured profession.”

29. The goal is attractive, illuminating. How to reach it? The woods are lovely, dark and deep. How to equip oneself to travel the miles? What are the rules of the game? What are the guidelines to observe? Here are a few:

30. **A few basic approaches**

31. Generally it is said, also believed as rational, if you are not a part of the solution, you are a part of the problem. But this is not right, emphatically writes Debashish whom I have referred to earlier. He says: If you are not a part of the problem you can never be a part of solution. So, involve yourself into the problem; do not run away. Solution is detected only by reaching to the root of the problem and the root is reached by involving. You do not feel the acuteness of the issue unless you are involved.

32. Do the small things with great love. Perfection in work comes with constant watchfulness which is another name for love. Minor things are not in minority; they invariably constitute the majority. Shiv Khera, the educator and motivator of world fame says (and he has copy right on it) - *Winners Do Not Do Different Things, They Do The Things Differently*.

33. Michelangelo was a great sculptor. He was also a great perfectionist. Once he was making a sculpture when a friend happened to visit him. The friend saw him doing the finishing touches and praised the beautiful work of art.

Some days later; the friend came to see Michelangelo again and found that he was working on the same statue. It looked just the same to him as it had on his

previous visit, so he said casually; “It seems you have been working on some other statues in these past few days; or have you been relaxing?”

Michelangelo replied, “I’ve been working each day on this one only. I’ve been polishing some parts, sharpening some lines and softening some features. I’ve been adding muscle and energy to the arms and making the lips more determined.”

The friend said, “Tch! Tch! What a waste of time. These things have no significance. These are mere trifles; yet you pay so much attention to them!”

Michelangelo replied slowly but surely, “They may be mere trifles my friend, but trifles make perfection and perfection is no trifle!”

34. Aim at achieving excellence. If you have a desire to display excellence in yourself and manifest your excellence by enlarging the same so as to reach every nook and corner of the activities of your institution then remember the rule that wishes transform into work (just as energy transforms into excellence) by passing through three stages: form, focus and flow. When desire becomes aspiration, work is transformed into worship. Those inspired leaders transform into a successful leaders who work with the help of an execution compass. The execution compass drives work towards its highest purpose.
35. Let me share a personal experience with you, during my term as CJI, I had volunteered on behalf of the Indian judiciary to declare the year 2005 to be “The Year of Excellence”. I had said - Excellence consists of five “Is” (i) Initiative – We shall not be satisfied with doing just what is our duty. Each one of us shall exert to do better than his contemporaries or predecessors going beyond the goal of duty and to be better than himself; (ii) Intelligence – None of us shall feel satisfied by mediocrity i.e. by just being average; (iii) Industry – Each one of us shall exert to put his competence and capability to its maximum utilization; (iv) Integrity: (v) Inobtrusive personality i.e. modesty and humility. Imbibed with initiative, intelligence, industry and integrity what has been achieved is just what is the basic requirement of the

personality of a judge. Such achievements should not be a reason for developing any egoistic attitude. In the words of Homer – “Always to be the best and be distinguished above the rest.”

36. Leadership is essential relationship. Relationship is formed when the distance between hearts and minds are bridged by a shared purpose. Just remember the principle of partnership. There may be moments of friction between Management or Administration on one hand and the teachers or students on the other, or between the teachers and the students or parents on the other. One side may feel to have been given a rough deal by the other. A deeper analysis would show that the cause for such divergence in thinking is because of distances between hearts and minds. The distances can be reduced and also bridged by a shared purpose. The principals and Administrators have to keep themselves busy networking when they are not working. In my home place an organization had opened a school for children. The rule was not to have more than 30 students in a class. Once I asked the class teacher the propriety of observing such rule with meticulous strictness. The explanation which the class teacher gave to me was an eye opener. He told me that one of the principles of the management of our institution is that the teacher must go and meet the parents and guardian of one student everyday, by rotation, and that is possible only when we have students not exceeding 30 in a class. The round is complete in one month. This is how we keep watch on the activities of the student inside and outside the class room and even when he is in his home. The class teacher was busy working when others were not. This was apart from one meeting in a week with Management, Head Master and the teacher. In one month the networking is complete and every next month the network was repaired, renewed and updated. A lesson for the educational institutions to learn.
37. Any leader of educational institutions would not survive long as leader unless he acquires the quality of inspiring leadership. This can be done not by mere preaching or delivering sermons to his colleague teachers and the students. He has to have nobility not only in words but also in action. He has to present himself as a role model before his staff, the teachers and the students. The leaders of educational institutions ought to be such as believe in what they do and do what they believe in. The same culture they should be able to inculcate in other partners in education. This needs sacrifice and determination. H.E. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, the Fr. President of India whom you are waiting to listen shortly afterwards,

once visited the Supreme Court of India and had an exclusive meeting with the Chief Justice of India and the Judges. He asked the bearers, attendants and security people to leave the room so that we could have very open, frank and heart to heart exchange of views. At the end I asked him a question – what is your message to us, the Judges? Quick came the answer, In a firm penetrating voice he said – you are just 25 in the country. The entire population of more than 100 crores looks at you for dispensation of justice. Can you be a role model of justice, ‘Justice incarnate’, before the Indian polity? Needless to say the message was as large as brief was the answer.

38. To all those who are leaders in education and aspire to assume the role of inspiring leaders, I have a question to pose. Can you be role models to the students and before the society?

Ladies and Gentlemen!

39. The Principles of Management and Quality of leadership, the methods of inculcating then are to be found in books available in plenty. The general principles can always be moulded to suit the field of education. Having myself read a number of books, I have also realized that the best master is one’s own perception based on experience and best guide is one’s own vision. Everyone has to choose his own methodology within the frame work of well established principles. You have to be leader by your own right and be your own guide. It is the honesty of purpose that enables the Divinity to guide you on the right path. Muhammed Ali, the Great, once told – ‘Champions are not made in the gyms. Champions are made from something they have deep inside them.’ The poet Robert Frost tells us in his poem – ‘the Road Not Taken’:

*Two roads diverged in a wood, and I,
I took the one less travelled by,
and that has made all the difference.*

40. A leader leads, commands and knows the art of getting the things done. An inspiring leader is not just a leader. He is something more, and therefore, a little different too. An inspiring leader is one who knows the way, shows the way and goes the way. He leads and from the frontline exhorts the followers to follow. He does not sit in ivory towers and push the ranks

from behind. Any other meaning of leadership in the field of education would be self destructive; for education is that process which makes a man easy to lead but difficult to drive, easy to govern but impossible to enslave.

41. Leaders of education in India shall have to give a global dimension to their vision. Education sector in India shall have to be so organized and revitalized as to face competitors from beyond the borders. While it is true that globalization has broken the borders but breaking the barriers in education should not be allowed to make in-roads into our culture precincts. Our own values have to be preserved, protected and zealously guarded. Else we would be paying a very high price.

¹ [Rev. Dada J.P. Vaswani, on Teachers' Day; East and West Series, October 2010, pp. 30-32.]

² *The Facts Concerning the Recent Resignation in sketches New and Old*

³ *Creative Unity, an Eastern University*

⁴ *read education administrators*

⁵ *Speech dt. 15-12-1957*