

THE EINSTEINS OF INDIA ARE NOT IN ITS UNIVERSITY, SAYS YALE SCHOOL OF MGMT FACULTY DR SHYAM SUNDER

# Education for profit can't deliver quality: Yale prof

**D**r Shyam Sunder, a James L. Frank Professor of Accounting, Economics, and Finance at the Yale School of Management was in the city on Friday to deliver a lecture on Reforms in Higher Education in India and China, a study compiled and worked upon by him. At the IIT campus in Gandhinagar, he spoke to DNA's **Smitha Rajan** about what ails higher education and what can be done to improve the situation.

## WHAT DO YOU THINK OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA?

To me, higher education seems to be in a major crisis, and the sad part is that the crisis seems to be unrecognised. Most people in India make tall claims about higher education but actually reverse is the case. Indeed number of colleges, varsities and students enrolling in these are on the rise. But the pertinent question here is who is teaching these students? Who is doing research work? What is the quality of the papers being churned out? We should remember that the quality of education invariably depends on the quality of teachers.

## CAN YOU ELABORATE A BIT MORE ON THIS?

I will give you an example.



## “DO YOU THINK MORE IITS AND IIMS WILL HELP?”

They are not worth the effort if we can't bring in the quality teachers and research that such institutes should command. Merely increasing the number of such institutes is not going to help.

The farmer sows the best seeds to be sown for the next year. The country's best brains are the seeds for the society of tomorrow. But are we able to get them into the education sector? Our best brains are selling soaps and getting into civil service, nothing wrong in that, but we are not able to attract them to a sector that is most important to us - educa-

tion - particularly higher education. To put it simply, 'The Einstein's of India are not in our university'.

## CAN THE PRIVATE SECTOR HELP IN THE MATTER?

Let me tell you I have travelled across the world and have been to several universities and colleges. I have not seen a university that does not get a big

subsidy or charitable funding. But in India the private players who have entered the arena are into making money. We should remember that there is no profit-making in education. A for-profit education or profitable education in the end doesn't deliver quality at least not in higher education. I am not against private sector in education but I am against the 'for-

profit' model of education. Private sector can set up charitable organisations aimed at improving quality of higher education, can help sponsor institutions for the same.

## SO WHAT SHOULD BE DONE?

What we need is an India-centric solution. This is because solutions that worked in other countries may not work here. Secondly, we need to attract talent to the field of education. We need to identify our brightest people and ensure that they are in this field. At present a teacher's job is perhaps the last resort for a person. We also need to bring about a change in the mindset of both our business people and leaders that education should not be seen as a profit-making initiative. "Several of our so called education institutions are run by these people, isn't it?"

## A LOT HAS BEEN SAID ABOUT INDIA'S POOR RECORD IN RESEARCH...

To be very honest, I don't think there is any one reason for it. I think there are a complex set of reasons and but none of them alone will explain it. If research has to be promoted then you have to realise that the rules applicable to civil service cannot be put in practice to get the desired results.