



## **Research Foundation for Governance: in India**

### *Summary of the public debate*

#### **THE FUTURE OF EDUCATION IN INDIA**

**10<sup>th</sup> April, 2010**

**6:00 pm to 7.30 pm**

**Law Garden**

On Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> April 2010, Research Foundation for Governance: in India (RFGI) held an open debate at Law Garden to discuss the topic “*The Future of Education in India*” Held right after the passing of the Foreign University Bill and the implementation of the Right to Education Act; two very important legislations on education, RFGI was seeking to encourage discussion on them, their implementation in India, their merits and demerits and their significance for the future. The debate was well attended.

The position of the education sector in India was discussed first. There was a clear divide among the people on what is can be done to improve it. Common syllabus, better infrastructure and administration were suggested, all of which received both positive and negative remarks. It was accepted by all that not everything about the Indian education system is bad and all we need are a few improvement and efficiency.

#### **Foreign University Bill**

In a recent proposal, the education minister has given a proposal to allow foreign universities to set up campuses in India. The move has brought to light a debate regarding the quality of education in India.

A concern shared by many participants of the debate was that the foreign universities will treat their Indian campuses as second class. The quality of teaching would be lower



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than their original campus. A participant stated that India lacks universities in a very large number and the government will almost never be able to fulfil this demand so there is no harm in letting foreign universities enter the country and set up shop. Local universities will face competition from foreign universities and become more efficient. A lot of students in India want to go to foreign universities but cannot due to lack of financial means, this move will help them. A Harvard in Haryana is a dream come true for a lot of people. The coming of a lot of foreign students to India will also promote Indian culture and spread the image of India being a fast developing country. However, some participants argued that a very important part of a foreign degree is also the experience you get from studying in a different country, as it adds to the value of the degree. There were also concerns regarding the threat posed by this move to the quality higher education of Indian origin.

### **Right to Education Act**

The Act makes it compulsory for children between the age of 6-14 years to get primary education. It is a very good concept but the implementation has a lot of roadblocks. First of all what most participants thought of was the lack of teaching staff. Another concern among everyone was the providing quality education across the country. Considering the huge number of children in India, it would take a mammoth effort from the administration to organise the education sector. The question of child labour was also raised. It was suggested by the participants that night schools or vocational studies can be adopted to try and tackle it. The role of the common citizen to help the government was also discussed. Business houses are already running some schools for under privileged children. They should be encouraged. Reservation of 25% for underprivileged students in private schools was a topic which received radical views, both for and against.

Founder and Managing Director of RFGI, Kanan Dhru, concluded the discussion. She said that the concept of education in India has gone through fundamental change after



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introduction of these two critical bills. It is imperative that the civil society continues to participate with the Government in its agenda for reform. The entry of foreign universities is good if the government acts with caution. The Right to Education Bill is a very bold move. It shows the noble intentions of the Government. However, much effort is required to work out the modalities to implement this bill successfully.

*“Concentrate on a country’s children for 30 years and you won’t have to worry about the country again.”*

RFGI would like to thank those who took part in the event, and Law garden for providing us with the venue.