

Draft speech of Smt. D. Purandeswari, MoS – HRD on founder's day celebrations 2006 of Arulmingu Kalasalingam College of Engineering Anand Nagar, Krishna Koil, Tamilnadu on 6<sup>th</sup> October, 2006.

Respected Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ravichandran MP, Principal and others members of the Governing Council of the College, other guests and friends,

I am extremely grateful to have been invited here to participate in the celebrations of the Founder's Day of your college and share with you some of my perceptions on some aspects of education and its relevance in the context of the emerging economic scenario. I may make it clear in the outset that the opinions that I am articulating do not necessarily represent the official viewpoint.

Education plays a pivotal role in a country's development and growth. It holds the key to political, social and economic progress and promotes national integration in underdeveloped and developing countries. As rightly emphasized by the Education Commission 1948-49 a well-developed and well integrated educational system can be an effective means of national development if it relates to productivity, strengthens social and cultural bonds, hastens the process of modernization and strives to build character by cultivating moral and spiritual values. We have, therefore, been paying adequate attention to draw up an organized educational system which could take care of our special needs as a developing country. While the educational progress in terms of quantity has been impressive, we somehow missed the qualitative aspects of the

educational development. This is partly because of our failure to organize proper man-power planning and partly due to an imbalance in the provision of facilities between general and technical education. Our schools and colleges have been turning out large number of pupils with general education courses which were not employment-oriented. The result is a phenomenal increase in the number of educated unemployed and unemployable persons in the country which clearly points to a defective educational planning and performance.

In my perception, an ideal educational system should be pyramidal in structure- a structure in which there are fewer people at each level as you proceed towards the top. The base at this structure should include all children and this should represent the stream of elementary education up to the age of 14 years. The middle of the pyramid should represent a secondary education for the students within 14-17 years with emphasis on vocational education. The top of the pyramid should include the highest echelon of students who should make it to the specialized education in universities in different streams, and professional disciplines like medicine, engineering, management, IT etc.,

While we have certainly been taking care of the education at the primary and secondary stages but we have still to give a vocational thrust to our educational system in a very effective manner. Our Indian universities all put together produce 3.6 million graduates every year of whom only 0.9 million are employable. Experts say

graduate unemployment is growing because our university education is simply not geared to meet employment objectives. Those who pass out may have a degree but lack skill sets. Of the 9.28 million students of higher education, only 17% are pursuing professional streams while the rest are in degree programmes.

What we have to ensure now is that there should be a vocational bias at the end of secondary education. In the absence of vocational bias at the secondary level, students are proceeding to higher education pursuing degree course in general education resulting in the creation of surplus manpower who do not fulfill the productive requirements of the country. Diversification of education at secondary level would reduce the pressure on higher education. Vocationalization and terminalization of education at the middle school level and secondary education level is thus essential to gear up educational development for economic growth.

My young friends you must be happy that you are completing your studies at a time when the Indian economy is looking up and poised for a phenomenal growth. You will have adequate prospects and possibilities of meaningful success in your professional career.

Today, India is one of the fast growing economies of the world. A new sense of optimism about the Indian economy prevails within and outside the country. Sustained high growth rates and export mechanism together with the sterling performance of Information Technology are making India particularly attractive as a market and as an investment destination.

As I said earlier, the top of the pyramidal system of education should include the highest echelon of students who should make to a specialized education in universities for teaching and research. The Universities and other centers of advanced learning on specialized studies like Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, Institute for Cultivation of Science, Kolkata, Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Mumbai etc., should also be engaged in dissemination by latest knowledge (teaching) and to advance the frontiers of knowledge (Research) Ideally the same set people should perform these two functions. Therefore a university should make a good blend of those who excel in teaching and research. So much about the fundamental or basic research.

So far as the functional research is concerned it deserves more attention as adequate provision for industrial and scientific research should be an important component in the new educational system in view of their growing demands in the context a new development scenario. The C.S.I.R and the various institutes there under should devote more serious attention in this regard and emerge more and more functional research.

The 1400 engineering colleges in the country produce 4.5 lakh graduates annually. But since the world class talent is limited to only about 20,000 to 40,000 graduates, there will be a stiff competition for this pool. That means those who are employable are going to be rare and cost prohibitive. What is the alternative? It is time that industries

join with institutes to share the cost of additional training. They need to institute scholarships that can help the prospective employees to learn what they want to learn before they come out of the college. Many companies are doing so and others have started doing it. It is also time that teachers reach out to industries and update themselves on industry requirements. They should also look for research problems the industries want to solve. Institutions have the advantage of having large and competitive knowledge workforce in their students. It is time that industries and institutes come closer and work together.

To maximize the benefit of industrial research, therefore there should be a complete integration between the scientific research and industrial development: in fact both these activities should go hand in hand. We should encourage efforts to promote industry focused research and ensure their immediate practical applications. The specialized research unit in the universities should also act as a conduit between academic centers of research excellence and global industry to integrate and synergise their research efforts and place students in industrial research centers to facilitate quality research. This would meet the demands of the industry and ensure supply of adequate quality research papers functionally suitable to the industry.

It would be ideal if a bipartite alliance between Industry, and the universities and colleges and institutions like yours could be forged wherever possible in order to ensure well developed research projects. In the wake of liberalization and privatization, the demands

of the economy would call for greater efforts by private agencies to foster industry focused research projects.

If we are successful in establishing an interface between industry and the university and promote a meaningful scheme of functional research on the lines of some of the developed countries we will have attained a magnificent achievement in ensuring continuous flow of knowledge from the University and the Institutes of higher learning like your college to the industry. This will not only generate huge employment opportunities but also boost up the production pattern both in terms of quantity and quality. As has been well said the 21<sup>st</sup> Century belongs to Asia. I have no doubt that some sustained efforts from our side will justify this prediction. Before I end I wish the students of the college a very great future and I pray AKCE would soon grow into an Institute of International repute and contribute to the development of this mighty nation.

With these words I have pleasure in inaugurating the Founder's Day celebrations of your college.

Thank you,

Jai Hind.