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Conference on problems of 'School of Tomorrow'

Meera Srinivasan

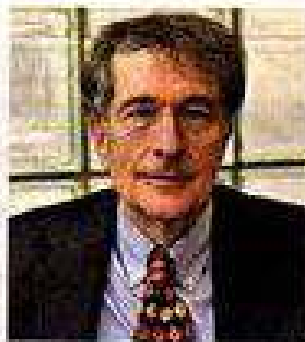
CHENNAI: Is ensuring quality school education the responsibility of the government entirely? What can private players do? What is the responsibility of corporates? Can partnerships help?

'School of Tomorrow' – the Xseed conference on quality schools to be held in the city on Wednesday seeks to find answers to these questions and more. Noted academics, educationists and practitioners will share their views on these, and the following discussions are aimed at some possible answers.

The conference is being organised by iDiscoveri, a social enterprise with several alumni of noted institutions such as Harvard, Cambridge, IIMs, MIT, and XLRI, which is working in the space of school education, enterprise leadership development and outdoor education.

The keynote address would be delivered by Harvard University professor Howard Gardner through video-conferencing facility.

In an e-mail interview to *The Hindu*, Dr. Gardner said



Howard Gardner

that challenges in schools varied from one country to the other. "In wealthy countries, it is making schools relevant...In developing countries, it is giving students enough knowledge, skills, and motivation so that they can make sure that their country does not get left further behind." On debates in India on whether a board examination is needed in Class X and the CBSE's effort to introduce continuous comprehensive evaluation in schools, Dr. Gardner said: "In a country of any size and complexity, and that would include the U.S. and India, there ought to be a number of educational pathways. Families should choose

one alternative, and that alternative ought to develop its own set of examinations."

Asked how schools could consciously make learning a stress-free experience for students, and at the same time, have good tools to evaluate how much a child has actually grasped, he said: "When learning becomes too stressful, then young people are turned off of using their minds. Conversely, when young people enjoy learning, they will continue to do so throughout life. But very few ministers of education seem to understand this."

It is precisely for insights such as these that the conference would be very valuable, says iDiscoveri CEO Ashish Rajpal, himself a student of Dr. Gardner. "The challenges facing school education today are humungous – whether it is about curriculum, syllabus, teacher training or textbooks. No one person can address it. We hope to have a useful dialogue with different stakeholders at the conference," he said. For details on the conference, visit:

<http://www.xseed.in/schooloftomorrow.html>