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Biggest Conference for Progressive Change in Education, School Of Tomorrow Culminates Successfully
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Report by Roostars - Parinda, New Delhi: The second edition of School of Tomorrow, an XSEED annual international conference on innovative education, witnessed thought leaders and educators engage in high quality and stimulating dialogue that could pave the way for progressive change in school education.

Held simultaneously across New Delhi, Mumbai, Hyderabad and Chennai, School of Tomorrow is an unprecedented effort to generate thought leadership for school education in the Indian context. The programme was seamlessly integrated via across the four cities using internet and videoconferencing technology.

Prof Peter Berge from MIT Sloan School of Management, one of the world's foremost researchers on teaching and learning for understanding Prof David Perkins from Harvard University, distinguished author and former CEO of Google India Sanjay Das, presented stimulating keynote addresses that were on-aircast across 4 cities. Over 50 attendees from the domains of education, corporate and business participated in the three education forums.

In a message, Dr. A P J Abdul Kalam, outlined his vision for the kind of school India needs to emerge as knowledge super power and detailed out his expectations on the values, skills and attitudes that need to be inculcated in the formative years.

Prof David Perkins, a senior professor at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and co-founder of Project Zero research group spoke on what effective schools of future will look like and what can be effectively done at present to take advantage of these opportunities.

Professor David Perkins, Harvard University feels, "As educators, we all want learning that matters, learning that makes a deep difference in students' lives. And of course much of what students study from kindergarten to graduate school does matter. However, a lot of it doesn't. Whereas traditionally we educate for the knowers, today's world also asks us to educate for the unknown, preparing learners with the knowledge and perspectives, the communication, learning, and thinking skills and attitudes for thriving in the 21st century. Here we envision the opportunities and challenges of educating not just for the knowers but the unknown."

Prof Peter Berge highlighted, "The world has moved out of the Industrial Age, and to face the business world. Our educational system, however, has not. We must abandon Industrial Age assumptions about schools. This requires centering learning on the student instead of the teacher, discouraging "rote learning," and getting away from rote memorization. In short, it means treating schools like living systems instead of machines. Attempts to improve the "living system" must therefore be wholehearted interventions and not just patchwork solutions."

Sanjay Das shared, "India has become the second fastest growing economy in the world with one twist but. The twist here is a metaphor for the fact of good education is our Achilles. Imagine what would happen if the other hand got untied. India would be formidable if we were able to educate our children."

The pattern of the experience was such that each city featured two facilitated panels of experts - education domain experts and business as of government leaders who discussed the vision and on how to create that can transform school education. For the panel an Unconventional Practices in Schools, noted educationist Asha Adams, former Director Shri Ram School, Gurukul Kangri from Delhi School; David Darwen OBE; Gurneet, Bhatia, JUSCO discussed how school leaders can act to improve teaching and learning.

The second panel that deliberated on the Society's Expectations from Schools (moderated Vinod Joshi, IIT, Chairman, CSIR; Asha Adams, former Director of KJ Somaiya Institute; Dr. Rajaraj Reddy Jay, Director, Wellbeing Institute; Das Narayana, one of the founders of S.S. Public, Vellore; Sanjay Das, former CEO of XSEED and Asha Adams from XSEED's Foundation).

XSEED has been adopted by over 400 schools across the country (including 200+ schools in South India and now teaches 1,00,000+ students and 10,000 teachers). Some of the leading schools implementing XSEED include Hyderabad Public School, Marlaya Scotts School, Patna International School, Chennai, Bangalore International School, etc. XSEED has shown visible impact in student learning including improvement in areas of basic concepts, better vocabulary and communication skills and close to 20% improvement overall in students performance in pilot studies.

XSEED, the flagship program from XSEED, is a pathbreaking and comprehensive solution for quality teaching and learning in K-12 schools.

Speaking on the occasion, Asha Adams, CEO, (School Education), remarked, "India is on the threshold of emerging as a knowledge superpower and progressive education will play a key role in shaping young adults into contributors of tomorrow's knowledge economy. Hence the need of the hour is to present a holistic and a powerful solution for what schooling can be, a practical understanding of what society is to inside the classroom to bring the vision to reality, and a collaborative mindset between educators, business and government leaders to sustain this change over a period. The School of Tomorrow is an unprecedented effort in this direction as good education is imperative to building a just, compassionate and sustainable society."

The first edition of School of Tomorrow hosted in 2009 witnessed participation from more than 200 schools. The conference engaged the audience in a high quality interactive dialogue on school education. Prof. Howard Gardner of Harvard University presented the keynote address via live video link from the United States. The unique "Adopt a School program" which allows supporters to directly participate in improving the learning outcomes in low income schools across the country was also launched.

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