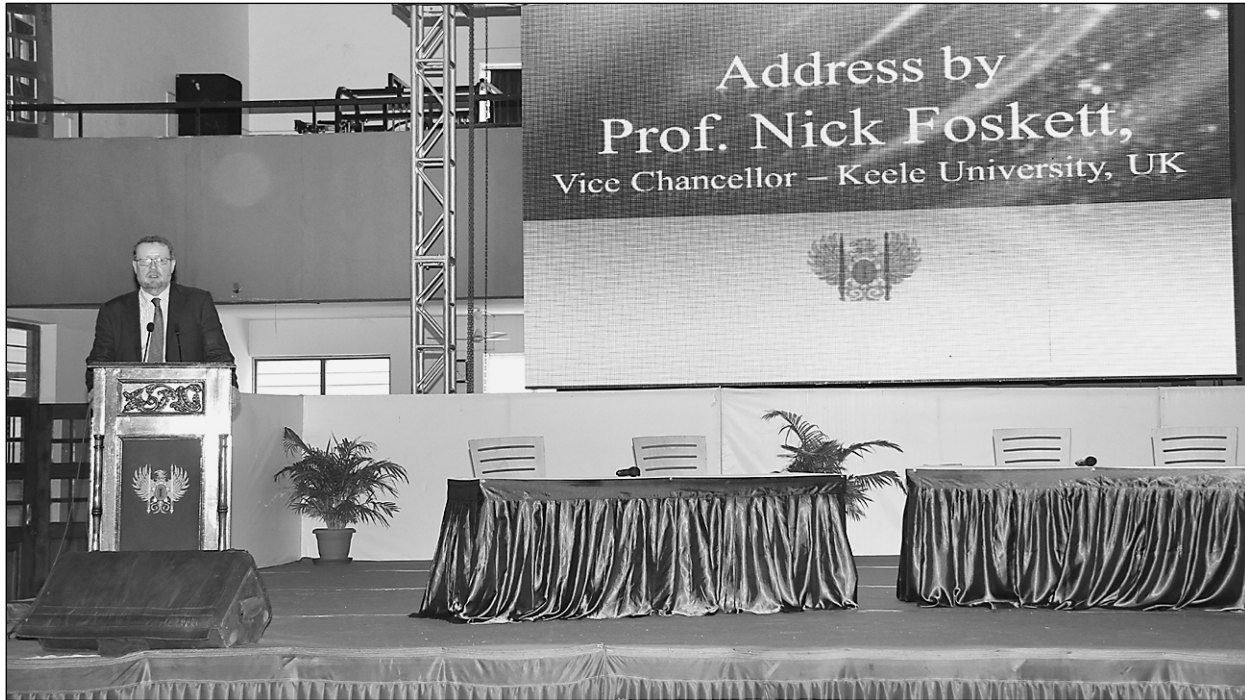


Grooming Tomorrow's Leaders Today



BRAJ KISHOR GUPTA

Indus International School, Bangalore holds the pride of place among international schools. It deserves plaudits for successfully hosting Leadership Summit on 27th Mar, 2013. The summit was unique for many reasons. It saw a host of leaders on the dais, most of whom were students of the school. It was an opportunity for young learners like Adheesh Lilaramani, Aishwarya Subramanian, Akansha Majumdar, Arnav Malhotra, Dharani Kalyanareman, Dhruv Jain, Rohan Krishna, Medha Bhattacharya, Pranav Daryanani, Sarayu Acharya, Vishal Muddaraj and others to showcase their talent. It was immensely satisfying to find them debating and discussing leadership issues with awareness and aplomb. They were all vocal about the need to nurture tomorrow's leaders today. They were quite at ease in panel discussions on esoteric topics such as 'Moral Imagination and Spirituality' and "A Disciplined Mind". They were aware of the intricacies as also the finer aspects of different religions. They seemed unequivocal about the pressing need to incorporate in the school curriculum not only values and ethics but also spirituality. Spirituality cannot be an exclusive domain of a particular religion; it is the summation of every religion. I was however thrilled to find budding minds sensitive, mature and informed, appreciating the value of having a disciplined mind.

Moreover, Leadership

Summit had many other distinguished speakers. It was a treat to listen to Lt. Gen (Retd) Arjun Ray, CEO Indus Trust. He was emphatic about the need to redesign the syllabus to cater to the new needs of the present generation. Our schools and colleges can no longer afford to be teaching subjects which were relevant in the 20th century. General Ray also dwelt upon his favorite theme of sustainability. He asked if sustainability had become a major issue facing our society, how come, this does not form the curriculum of our schools and colleges yet. Conventional threats are no longer relevant today as tomorrow's world has already arrived. Our society is already witnessing the depletion of basic resources like water. There is a struggle going on between the privi-

leged and the unprivileged. Day by day the world is becoming flatter and flatter.

Mention also needs to be made of Mrs Sarojini Rao, the Principal, Indus International School. She dealt with the philosophy of leadership, highlighting the growing relevance of EQ today. She felt that the prime purpose of education is to prepare our children for life. It is important for a school to nurture leadership by giving them opportunities to practise life skills such as problem solving, decision making, risk taking, persuasive communication etc.

As a matter of fact, everyone was eager to listen to the Chief Guest, who had come all the way from the UK to grace the Leadership Summit. He was Prof NICK FOSKETT, Vice Chancellor, Keele University. He was

accompanied by his wife Prof Rosalind Foskett, who is a Dy VC Worcester University. He was happy about the fiery debate on leadership. He was candid in admitting that the crisis of leadership had become a global challenge. As a result, there was a growing need for involving schools and colleges more and more in community services. That would go a long way in nurturing future leaders. I had however the privilege of interacting with Prof Nick soon after his address. He was kind enough to answer some of my questions relating to the leadership challenges in the following words:

About the opportunities for Indian students at Keele University.

Prof Nick: Keele is one of the UK's leading campus-

based universities. It is a broad-based university, providing undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in most disciplines, with three Faculties (Health; Natural Sciences; Humanities and Social Sciences). It is noted for the quality of its teaching and learning, ranking 5th in the UK in the latest National Student Survey, and also for its high employability achievement, where it ranked 3rd in the UK last year. In addition to the quality of its teaching, the campus provides a beautiful setting for study - it is the largest university campus in the UK, with considerable areas of parkland and woodland. Keele is also renowned for the strong sense of community. With a student population of about 10,000 it is small enough to be friendly and supportive, but large enough to provide excellent facilities. About 15% of students are from overseas, from some 120 different countries. Overseas students are able to live in high quality student residences on the campus for the whole of their programs at Keele. Keele also has strong traditions of excellence for supporting research students studying for PhDs and other research degrees. Keele has some 500 alumni in India, many of whom now occupy very senior roles in business, universities and government. Indian students choosing Keele will follow a well-established pathway that leads to future high achievement, and will spend their student years in a welcoming, intellectually-challenging and beautiful academic setting.

Views on the present Education system in India.

Prof Nick: India has world-leading universities, but is challenged by the need to provide excellent education for its large population of young people and to equip them with the skills to support the nation's rapidly growing economy. The government is seeking to invest strongly in education, both through its own resources and by working in partnership with education providers from overseas.

Reasons for interest in Indus and experience at the Leadership Summit.

Prof Nick: Keele has worked with Indus for some 3-4 years. Indus represents the best of practice amongst international schools in India,

while at the same time its social commitment through its community schools is impressive. Keele works with Indus to support the professional development of its teaching staff in terms of both initial teacher training and continuing professional development. Keele is also engaged in enabling students from the UK to spend time on a voluntary basis in India, working with the community school and its projects.

The Leadership Summit demonstrated the school's commitment to fostering leadership understanding amongst its pupils. Effective leadership skills are essential to all young people in preparing them to cope with the rapidly changing world they are about to enter, but are also essential for providing the leaders who can tackle the key local, national and international challenges of the future. The Leadership Summit showcased excellent examples of the student's understanding of leadership.

Challenges in Leadership today & the way forward.

Prof Nick: The biggest challenge facing individuals, organizations and countries is the speed of change and the consequent uncertainty about the nature and shape of the future. Hence the big leadership challenge in terms of skill is the ability to constantly monitor the changing world and develop new approaches and strategies to deal with the issues that emerge. Overall, the biggest challenge is sustainability - ensuring that economic and social conditions continue to improve while recognizing the limits imposed by factors such as climate change, global health issues, resource pressures etc. All leaders of the future need to be centrally committed to the sustainability of environments, communities and organizations.

It was a great learning experience for me to be interacting with Prof Nick Foskett in particular and the young budding minds of Indus in general. The takeaways of the Leadership Summit were huge. I gained the insight that leadership is an evolving process that embraces our entire life. Leadership is therefore everyone's business; it is an opportunity for self-development as also one's ability to influence the behavior of others. I thanked the Indus Management for inviting the Education Post to the Summit & returned to my nest ruminating over the beautiful lines by Sir Edmund Hillary:

"Mount Everest has a real problem.

Everest cannot grow any more, whereas I can."

The writer is an inspirational speaker and soft skills corporate trainer.

*motivationguru@hotmail.com
www.thelifeflow.com*

