



Interview

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Q1. GIIS has seen exponential global growth during the last decade. What is your Mission and strategy, and what have been the major drivers of your phenomenal growth witnessed globally?

GIIS's mission is to nurture our global students into becoming well-rounded men and women who are leaders of distinction and integrity, committed to the spirit of excellence. We do this through our vision of not just being teachers, but being learners in this educational journey. We achieve this through a dedicated team of faculty and staff who are committed to see this goal accomplished in every new venture we undertake. Our strategy is simple - we provide quality education through excellent infrastructure. We evolve and embrace change to better ourselves so that we can make our students' lives and future better. This sincerity of purpose is the sole driver of our success.

Q2. The GIIS Smart Campus in Singapore has been planned on a grand scale and is very well equipped. It exemplifies a very innovative and progressive approach. Tell us more about it.

GIIS SMART Campus is the school of the future. It has been

especially designed with 21st century challenges in mind, so that we are equipped to impart on our students the kind of education that will empower and prepare them to take on challenges of the future.

The idea originated three years ago, which is when teachers and staff members brainstormed on what a new age school should have to raise well-rounded students who will one day be ideal global citizens. Architects then brought these ideas to life and designed a campus which represented a nest where students are nurtured from a fledgling to a feathered stage. The school has more than 90 digital classrooms with wifi networks, smart boards, audio-visual systems, projectors, iPads for students and collar mics for teachers. In addition, it has more than 40 skills-based labs - like Radio Station and TV Studios, where emphasis will be on honing the inherent skills of students to give them an extra edge over peers. It has extensive indoor and outdoor sports facilities, which will collect game data through special servers which can be used to analyse games and improve skills. All this is in a safe and secure environment. Even attendance is taken through facial recognition which gives access to classrooms, and adds an additional layer of security to a student's safety.

All these facilities, combined with a great team of qualified faculty, make our school one of the most advanced institutions where learning happens in a holistic manner to educate a well-rounded next generation. Our minimal green footprint and focus on sustainability adds the proverbial icing to the cake.

Q3. The roles of research, Business Excellence, Innovation and Visionary Leadership have become indispensable today. How is GIIS driving this agenda, and inculcating it through its educational goals and programmes for success?

We believe in the well-rounded development of students. Our award-winning Nine GEMS holistic framework is an embodiment of this thought. Under these GEMS, we stress not just on academic excellence but also on sports excellence, excellence in performing and visual arts, developing entrepreneurial and innovation skills, embracing community with care and inculcating universal values and ethics among our students.

Our Entrepreneurship and Innovation Boot camps teach students the art of leadership, of thinking out of the box, of innovating and improvising. Coding and Robotics is taught in our schools from primary sections onwards, which gives our students an early start into these new languages of communication. Many of our students are already writing codes for Artificial Intelligence like Chatbots, or have developed and released Apps on Google Play.

Then there is our Global Exchange programme which encourages collaboration among peers on various topics through various mediums. Sports initiatives like Gold Squad programme give special coaching to students who show promise in cricket totally free of cost.

Q4. A disconnect appears between Industry and Academia, especially in India. What are your views on the same and how do you propose to bridge the gap in India?

Academia is Industry in its infancy. A strong academia of today will mean a robust industry of tomorrow. It would be unfair to state that the two are disconnected in India. Our IIM and IIT graduates are doing wonders for the industry not just in India but also around the world. Some of the major MNCs of the world are helmed by Indians who are a product of these very institutions. Higher education is very well versed with the needs and wants of the industry.

Having said that, there is a need to narrow the gap between academics and industry at a more basic level - like in schools. This is where the bulk of the talent lies, waiting for direction, waiting for opportunities and infrastructure. Schools around India - at urban and rural levels - have all realised and adapted the need to embrace technology as the new method of delivering the goods to millions of children hungry for information and education. GIIS, itself, has jumped on the bandwagon to promote the use of existing technology to nudge the younger generation into thinking out of the box and being innovators and entrepreneurs. We have also adopted a tribal school in Tilakwada which carries the baton of our vision to these rural communities full of talent and aspirations. More

and more education institutions are (and should) be doing the same, and this is how the gap will decrease.

But, one must remember, that India is like an elephant. It is huge, it is also slow. It will take its own time to lift its bulky self and start walking, but when it picks up pace it will also be a formidable, powerful force which is going to be unstoppable and which will have the power to change the landscape. Indian system is evolving, give it time.

Q5. The commercialization and high cost of quality education at all levels is becoming a growing concern, especially in India. How does GIIS plan to spread quality education for the Millennials?

Quality education is a right of every student. It is the duty of every nation, every educational institution, every academic to make sure that quality education is imparted on its youth in every corner of the country.

At GIIS, we believe in giving premium quality education to students at a moderate fee level. All our campuses are steadily working towards the goal of matching the facilities and infrastructure of the SMART Campus in Singapore, which will ensure that students in all our campuses get excellent education, excellence facilities and excellent opportunities available to them, whichever strata of society they come from.

A majority of our teachers are very highly qualified - including having doctors and masters' degrees to their credit. They are constantly upgrading themselves through workshops and courses which are relevant for their profession and to help them do a better job in classrooms and with students. We encourage and impart training on teachers to achieve this.

Besides this, we also give a number of benefits to students through various valued added programmes at a nominal cost or free of cost.

In addition, GIIS also offers scholarships to deserving students from all walks of life, in a field of their strengths. For eg: a student good at sports can avail a sports scholarship, or those good at fine arts can apply for fine arts scholarships. This is to ensure that no student is left behind, and there is equal opportunity for all.

Q6. You left a secure high profile job to start this venture called the GIIS, and its resounding success is a result of your continued efforts. What are some of the vital entrepreneurial lessons you will like to share with the budding entrepreneurs of today?

For me, Entrepreneurship is the foundation of progress. Once upon a time, one smart mind invented the car and it caused a revolution. At present, another smart mind is testing out driverless cars. Tomorrow an even brighter mind may invent flying cars. Imagine the change, the progress these enterprising ideas can bring to the world. The possibilities are limitless. Our world needs such enterprising people with great ideas for a better future. A bright new idea will always change the world.

India is a nation of limitless talent. Dr APJ Abdul Kalam once said: The resource of the youth is an important building block



for transforming a nation. He believed that it is the youth in India who will push the nation to development and economic progress through its sheer energy and passion. I too believe in the same young India.

To these young entrepreneurs in India, and around the world, I say this: Believe in yourself, believe in your idea, work hard and work smart. When you make these four rules the four wheels of your drive, you will surely ride on the superhighway of success.

Q7. You have been an innovator in your long and glorious innings in the education sector. Do you feel digitization has changed the face of education, globally?

There is no doubt about it. Just like it is a folly to insist on riding a bullock cart in the age of satellites and rockets, it will be a folly to use only a chalk and blackboard to impart education on the new generation. Our current generation is already born with a gadget in one hand and a stylus in another. They speak and understand the digital language much better than the adults around them who are introducing them to the gadgets. Wireless technology is allowing students in Indian subcontinent to connect with students in Africa to exchange ideas, learn about new cultures and listen to expert-speak. TED Talks are in, eLearning is possible, online universities are thriving and empowering students everywhere. Schools have to adopt fast - they owe it to their students to give them the right tools and right direction in life.

Q8. We see GIIS pupils and alumni reaching places and accomplishing many noteworthy feats. What would you say is the USP of pedagogy at GIIS?

Students are our DNA. We have made educating students with the right academic and extracurricular skills the centre of our education system which believes in holistic framework. At GIIS, they don't just learn to read and write or score marks and be toppers, they learn to innovate, improvise, excel. They learn to be leaders, they learn to be entrepreneurs. They gain confidence, they collaborate, they brainstorm, they debate. They play sports, represent the school and country at district, state or national levels. They learn skills, polish their inherent talents and shine brighter. Our community connect programme inculcate the right values and ethics among children.

When our students leave the school, they are not only toppers in their academic fields, they are also emotionally and physically healthy human beings, who have the confidence and charisma to taken on challenges which they may face in life. At the same time they do not forget their inherent values of ethical behaviour, respect and kindness towards all and acceptance and brotherhood of all nations and cultures. That is why they accomplish so many things. ■

Interviewed by:
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