

CAREERCONNECT

The link to your future

Learning, a lifelong process

Education is the most important ladder for a successful career path. In a candid conversation with **Charushilla Narula Bajpai, Founder Director and Key Mentor, University Connection – Part of EduShilla University Connection Private Limited, Sheena Sachdeva** brings forth the current scenarios and trends in the global education.



With such great editorial experience and immense knowledge in Education, how has been your journey till here?

I reckon that I am an outcome of my life's experiences. I've had a unique career trajectory that moves from the role of a communications major to an educationist. With an initial stint in advertising, between brainstorming sessions, deadlines and creative-briefs, the closest I ever got to thinking about children was when I worked on an account for baby foods! But things changed after I became a mother.

My educational journey began with an engaging motherhood experience and slowly transitioned into parenting guidance, leading life, transforming trainings, nationwide publishing projects, university growth partnerships and thereafter growing my own career guidance and college planning center.

The education sector has been home to me for more than 14 years now, and I have often expressed concern over the lack of unbiased guidance available to students and the decadent erosion of nobleness associated with the profession. In an effort to redeem the situation, I established, University Connection with the single-minded focus of employing an evenhanded approach to education guidance and facilitation.

The idea is to empower career choices, allow students and families to think beyond limitations, reach out for their dreams with the correct information and preparation – it's integral to University Connection's complete application admission schedule. I like to call it "The Road Trip" – where every milestone is a learning point and reaching the final destination happens by default, almost like destiny.

As a teacher in various schools across the globe, how will you compare the condition of education in India and abroad?

Education beckons me. It took me to the United States where I not only visited numerous American teaching organisations, I became actively involved in business development and training at some of them. While my primary objective has been to build a progressive culture aimed at shaping students holistically, I find that student-centricity often gets compromised in an Indian education framework. We want to fit round pegs into square holes simply because we like it or it suits us or it's part of our ideology.

After helping students to get into diversified fields

Courtesy: BUZZ Communications



such as acting, theater studies, music, dance and even sports management. I've often shared with parents that selecting a career or education path is not part of a populist agenda. Let them be. Provide academic and co-curricular input and then allow the natural process of evolution of interest take over. I find that human expectation is the single most damaging influence in a child's life and we as Indians are trained to think in comparison with the neighbour, the best friend, we expect perfection as an outcome from our children, often with complete disregard to the inputs or the environment we provide them with.

What are the major drawbacks in the education system in India both at school and college level?

For young minds aiming for higher education, particularly in India, the need of the decade is equitable, fair-minded direction so that they can plan better and achieve nothing less than the best.

Unfortunately, commercial messages and miscommunication with vested interests is rampant today and even in this information age, it tends to confuse the student rather than clarifying them. Moreover, there is no school or college curriculum that discusses individual student aspirations and career choices.

College Planning and mentorship is specialized field and unfortunately most counseling trainings even for teachers, does not move beyond the psychological paradigm. There is so much changing

in the world today – demonization, digitization, immigration embargoes, online education emphasis, careers without degrees, mushrooming of start-ups and more!

The Education system and its stalwarts need to help students with tools meander through this scenario and figure out what's best for them. Is it truly happening?

After President Donald Trump decision's on H1B Visa and immigration restrictions, how will it affect the students in India and other countries across the world?

Whether you are at school, in college or a young professional aiming for the American dream, President Trump's comments in the last few weeks may seem to have put your plans in jeopardy. Well, you should know that this unconstitutional and discriminatory ban is in direct opposition to the values that most U.S. universities stand for. My colleagues in the U.S. would like it to be known that the universities in America are known for diversity and inclusion. This has been built over years and centuries perhaps - to imagine that they are going to succumb to political agendas and dictates, and ruin this branding built over a lifetime would be tragic.

As Indians, while conservation and looking at alternate options outside the United States can be looked into, programs with built-in OPT and co-op options must surely be considered

first. They allow you to show your work acumen. It is important to evaluate why do you want to study in the U.S., if immigration is the only reason to apply to the United States, think again.

What are the key steps for a student to study abroad across any stream?

Preparing to study abroad or even at a competitive university within India is a lofty goal that needs to be planned carefully. International education preparedness requires the basic skills of communication, research, critical thinking and time-management.

While some of the steps include selection of colleges/universities, pre-application procedures - guidance on exams, applications, essays, recommendation letters, scholarships, funding, post application help with visa formalities and final departure – there is so much profile-building and orientation that needs to be done before this.

In fact at University Connection, when we undertake this complete hand holding through the Road Trip, it also includes a short yoga experience to help the student reach a balanced state of mind before venturing overseas.

What has been your success mantra till yet?

There are two mantras or guiding principles that define my life - 'Character is your passport to collaborations' and 'teach, but never stop learning.' I am a student for life. ☺