

ASHISH RAJPAL

Managing Director
iDiscoveri Education Pvt. Ltd



Where would you place education on your national list of priorities?
Second, after early childhood healthcare. Half of India's children under five years are malnourished. If children are hungry they cannot learn much in school. If children are not well-nourished there's a possibility of stunting and brain damage. Therefore education and health are two sides of a coin.

How best to upgrade government schools?

The Central and state governments should get 'government' out of government schools and lease them to NGOs and professional educators to be regulated by an independent body. Moreover the Central government should promote world-class IEMs — Indian Institutes of Education Management — on the lines of the National Defence Academy, Khadakvasla.

Thinker/philosopher you admire most.

Many ranging from Gandhi to Murakami. Top of my mind is Howard Gardner, the Harvard professor who fathered the multiple intelligences theory. I regard him the greatest education and humanist thinker alive.

Your favourite Nobel laureate.

Many. But I will choose Rabindranath Tagore because in spite of its controversial roots, *Jana Gana Mana* is an outstanding national anthem.

Your leadership style.

I consider a large vision and a focused sense of mission as the core of any exceptional enterprise. A leader must bring that and then role model the hardest parts of the job. I try to do that. I fail everyday.

Your favourite book on leadership.

Leadership without Easy Answers by Ronald Heifetz.

For or against the RTE Act mandating 25 percent reservation for underprivileged children in private schools?

RTE is actually a RIPE Act i.e. Right Intention Poor Execution. No thinking person will really argue against the underlying principle and intentions of the Act. However, it's arguably one of the most poorly thought-out legislations of independent India.

Should education outlay be doubled by cutting defence expenditure?

No. Public subsidies which account for the largest amount of theft of public money must be halved and the money put in to education — with private partnership.

How satisfied are you with the growth and development of iDiscoveri?

Constantly dissatisfied, yet immensely proud. XSEED serves quarter of a million children to improve their learning outcomes.

Pessimistic or optimistic about Indian education?

Optimistic. Indians act only when pushed into a corner. That's where we are in education. The poorest have begun to see a real and direct connection between education and economic and social upliftment. State governments delivering better education will get re-elected.