

Meeting challenges head on

Staying focused on a career plan and financing their study, are two challenges students usually face. V Pradeep Kumar provides tips on how to manage both

Raju, an undergraduate student works in a super market promoting a breakfast cereal, which he cannot afford. Radhika an undergraduate student promotes services for an upmarket spa that she can't even dream to pay for. Chris goes for an evening college, but spends his day in a fast-food outlet. These are not just isolated cases: with the cost of education skyrocketing, an increasing number of students today are working.

When I see students who teach part time, pick up odd jobs in cafes, restaurants, supermarkets or work as domestic help to augment resources, I can only appreciate their resolve to pursue education, irrespective of personal challenges. Indeed, they are role models for students from better-off families, who have a penchant for splurging.

India being a knowledge economy, adequate education and soft skills are necessary whether you want to pursue a career or become an entrepreneur. However, in pursuit of education, students often face diverse challenges of admission into premier institutions, organising resources, handling unexpected setbacks or personal/family tragedies. So, how should one face such challenges?

Looking from the perspective of a young and ambitious student, two main challenges are, to stay focused

on a career plan and second, to finance the course.

Staying career focused is more a matter of the mind. A weak mind cannot think and is wavering. A long-term focus is the ability to look at the bigger picture and is an outcome of a strong determination. The focus on a bigger picture allows you to ignore the minor day-to-day hiccups.

Organising resources

The challenge of organising resources requires you to work on all alternatives. For example, if you are a student doing a professional course and are short of funds for expenses such as course fees, hostel expenses, books and so on, the following are various options to work on:

■ Educational loans: Banks offer loans to students at attractive terms of repayment, after course completion.

■ Financial assistance: Many trusts and philanthropic organisations assist bright and needy students.

■ Scholarships: Meritorious students can avail scholarships and grants from universities and institutions.

■ Corporate sponsorship: As part of social responsibility, many corporate houses sponsor talented students and take care of many expenses, either directly or through trusts.

■ Book banks: Several book banks distribute free books on a returnable basis. Books for professional courses are expensive and hence this is a



very useful option.

■ Part-time assignments: There are a number of part time assignments including freelancing from home and some could even be in your chosen field. They reward you for your time and count as experience as well.

Challenges are beneficial too

Notwithstanding the difficulties of facing them, challenges are beneficial too. The most significant benefit is that you develop a tough mental attitude. The success experience builds self-confidence and is a preparation to take on higher risks and scale new heights with maturity and wisdom. Importantly, the satisfaction of coming up the hard way is

matchless and the experience gained, is a lesson for life and a role model for others.

History is replete with stories of the struggle faced by several successful people, in their early life. Thomas Edison, American inventor, entrepreneur and founder of GE, who experienced a number of failures in his early life, said, "the first requisite for success is the ability to apply your physical and mental energies to one problem incessantly without growing weary".

The next time you are down in college or are faced with challenges, just remember that achievers like Akio Morita who founded Sony, Soichiro Honda who founded Honda, Bill Gates who founded Microsoft, or JK

Rowling who created Harry Potter, have all had initial failures. They just worked harder until they realised their dreams, creating success stories for others to emulate.

If as a student, you are facing challenges, work your way towards the bigger picture hoping that something good is going to happen. John Johnson, founder of Johnson Publishing said, "men and women are limited not by the place of their birth, not by the colour of their skin, but by the size of their hope".

So dream anything that you want to and the strength of your determination will give you the courage to face challenges.

(The writer is a management and career consultant)