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Has biotech education scenario improved?

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During the past decade, the biotechnology companies have grown significantly both with respect to revenue earned and visibility with broader national and international presence than earlier. New initiatives by entrepreneurs have capitalized on newer technologies and products, which have created resources, human or otherwise. However, from our perspective, the pastures have not been as green as they earlier seemed to be to attract the best of the talents.

While creating human resource, our trained graduates and scholars are our best assets. Companies bemoan on the quality of students available for hiring, because to recruit, retrain and retain the best of the talent is an arduous task. This is due to the lack of meaningful engagement and concerted industry-institute interactions. In order to overcome this, several government sponsored programs were set up, including the one by the Government of Karnataka. It appears that the contributions from biotechnology companies are not up to the mark, be it on deciding the framework of the program or the curriculum. This has ultimately reflected in the downturn seen in students opting for biotechnology and life sciences as career options. No graduate will choose a stream where the options seem limited and remunerations are meager. As a result, skilled graduates opt for higher studies. The companies are forced to compromise on the quality of the recruit, who will need retraining, thereby spending their precious time and valuable resources. However, there are companies which satiate the financial needs of a fresher, but unfortunately they are scarce. In this regard, the multinational biotechnology companies, which are not too many, have a head start and as a result have better results.

Considering that larger players are entering the field, the outlook is promising. However, it requires the biotechnology companies to step up or down (whichever way they feel) to the academia and actively participate in the creation of human resources in the ways they perceive. This will create a demand in the exciting field of biotechnology, bringing in the best brains of the country to research, while creating a supply chain for the industries.

In the recent past, teaching and hands-on training in the biotechnology education has improved due to enhanced infrastructure and accessibility to modern technologies. Several institutions offer students the opportunity for quality education and training, thereby creating a fast growing treasure of biotechnology graduates. Armed with suitable theoretical knowledge, technical skills and practical know-how, our graduates can ply their trade anywhere in the planet - be it in research or in industry. Our own biotechnology industries have begun to realize this potential and could take stronger steps to reap further benefits.