

PUBLICATION	THE FINANCIAL EXPRESS
EDITION	ALL INDIA
DATE	9TH APRIL 2010
PAGE NO	05

Zee bets big on education business; to set up 300 schools

By Bureau

Chennai, Apr 8: Subhash Chandra-promoted Essel group is betting big on education sector. With the Right to Education Act in place, the group eyes to become a leading player in the Indian education sector. As part of this exercise, Zee Learn, an education outfit of ETC Networks Ltd, has set up over 50 schools in the last 14 months across the country, considered to be fastest in India, said Essel group chairman Subhash Chandra.

"It is beyond business for us. Our objective is to set up at least 300 schools, 2,000 pre-schools (Kidzee) across the country by 2015 to provide education to 1 million students and then take it

to a few more million students in India," he said.

"We would become the number one player under private category in India and we will be investing around Rs 500 crore to Rs 700 crore over a period next five years to reach the milestone," Chandra maintained. Zee Learn has already invested Rs 100 crore and has achieved a turnover of Rs 100 crore. By 2015, Zee Learn will become a Rs 800-crore turnover company and will grow aggressively, he added.

Responding to queries, Subhash Chandra said the next logical step would be entering into university. "We will be setting up a university in Uttaranchal in 60 acres of land with an estimated investment of Rs 100 crore. The

Back to basics

- The company plans to set up 2,000 pre-schools (Kidzee)
- Hopes to provide education to 1 million students at present
- The firm will invest around Rs 500 crore to Rs 700 crore
- By 2015, Zee Learn eyes to become a Rs 800-cr turnover co



university will be ready by end-2011," he said. He further said, "The university will offer courses on important subjects such as teachers training, refreshing courses for existing teachers as well as newcomers, mass communication, film and entertainment related subjects, business

management, new streams such as course for supply chain/logistics management which will be primarily tailored to meet students job requirements."

"Education is not new to us. We were into education way back in 1995-96, but more of an IT education and also floated an education

channel. But we were failed in our earlier attempt as it did not work well for us. But we want to make Zee Learn as a leading education provider in India by providing quality education with its unique pedagogy, Litera Octave to ensure each student realises her/his unique potential," he mentioned. According to Sumeet Mehta, CEO, Zee Learn, "Of the proposed 300 schools, nearly 200 schools are owned by franchisees and the rest will be set up by Zee Learn. Zee Learn will provide content, R&D, technical aspects apart from course materials and curriculum, the franchisees will run the schools under Zee Learn brand." Zee Learn also provides training to teachers to meet its quality standards. Initially, we

follow the CBSE model and then look into international schooling, state boards, etc, he added.

Later on the sidelines, Subhash Chandra said that ETC Networks' education division became Zee Learn and will get listed on the stock exchanges as Zee Learn in a month's time. ETC Network's other activities will be merged with that of Zee television network, he added. ETC is already a listed entity.

According to him, the group is setting up an entertainment SEZ like set up near Mumbai in 800 acres of land to house all kinds of entertainment activities, including production houses (both pre and post production) research lab, amusement park, learning institute.