

2nd International Conference on Human Values in Higher Education 16-18 February 2013 at IIIT Hyderabad

Summary and Recommendations

28 February 2013

2nd International Conference on Human Values in Higher Education was held from 16-18 Feb 2013 at IIIT Hyderabad. It was organized jointly by IIIT Hyderabad, Punjab Technical University, Jalandhar and Royal University of Bhutan, Thimpu. About 110 participants attended the conference with about 30 Vice Chancellors and Directors. Participants came from Bhutan, Nepal and US besides India.

At the inauguration, Dr. M M Pallam Raju (Hon'ble Union Minister for Human Resource Development, Government of India) stressed on the need to reinforce values throughout formal education. He said this essential part of Nation building is even more important in today's context and must be a focus area for all educators. The 3-days of deliberations consisted of panel discussions, sharing of experiences and keynotes to develop specific recommendations and action plans.

On the first day, the theme was society and role of education. Talk by Dasho Prof. Pema Thinley, Vice Chancellor, Royal University of Bhutan related Gross National Happiness (GNH) with Value Education and how the latter can help Bhutan achieve GNH. The panel discussion on impact of society on education brought out how education has become market centred and grade oriented, with focus on jobs with peer pressure. IIT Gandhinagar has experimented with 5-week orientation program for incoming students with art, social work, communications skills and physical activity. It is having a good impact on de-stressing students. The day closed with a session on holistic development and value education which got the audience involved in lively discussion.

On the second day, the topic was Value Education (VE) and its impact on institution. Experience was shared by IIIT-H, Uttar Pradesh Technical University, Punjab Technical University etc. HV was introduced in IIIT-H as a compulsory and essential course in July 2005. The course has affected the students positively in relationships within the institution as well as with their families, regarding self reflection on anger etc, environment (addressing waste of water, electricity etc), and purpose (drawing attention towards studies and goals of life).

It was suggested that teachers need to be prepared for VE. Besides regular faculty, PG students as well as adjunct faculty (such as interested alumni, faculty spouses, and social enthusiasts) should be used to conduct these classes.

Panel discussion on Reorienting Education talked about the need to orient towards the self. There was a need to have both breadth and depth courses in VE. It would be good to have a compulsory foundation course on Value Education which can provide a large common base and would facilitate in future the conduct of elective courses, humanities projects, social internships etc. However, care must be taken to conduct VE with a spirit of inquiry promoting discussion.

The third day was devoted to implementation of Human Values in higher education. Prof Shashi Dhiman, Vice Chancellor, Himachal Pradesh Technical University informed that Human Values in Higher Education as a foundation course would be implemented from academic year 2013 onwards for 2nd year undergraduate students in all 50 engineering colleges in Himachal Pradesh. Prof Mahendra Singh, Member, UGC, Nepal expressed his keen desire to implement it in Nepal. Smt. Sarojni Ganju Thakur, IAS, Chairperson Himachal Pradesh Private Educational Institutions Regulatory Commission said that she will take active part in facilitating awareness and to promote value education. 1-day workshop for chairpersons is planned for May 2013. Prof. G K Vishwanath, Director Academics & Planning, Jawaharlal Nehru Technical University, Hyderabad reiterated the commitment of his university to offer a compulsory course on human values from the 2013-14 academic session. Workshops for Directors, teacher selection and orientation programs are already going on.

Prof. Rajeev Sangal (Director IIIT Hyderabad) shared the draft recommendations of the conference. These recommendations are about scaling up value education in higher education at the national level.

Shri Ashok Thakur, Secretary, Higher Education, MHRD said that experience sharing at the conference was honest, and passionate. India has not been able to handle liberalization and wealth creation. He also said that recommendations are eminently doable. Regulators can be asked to create conditions for VE by holding workshops in different cities, and accreditation process should include VE. He also said that in section 51A of Indian Constitution on fundamental duties clause J – “Strive for excellence of individual and collective ... parents and guardians”. Under this clause, a lot of work on HV can be done

Recommendations of conference

1. Value education should be introduced as an essential part of the curriculum of education, particularly technical education, at the national level. Different methodologies may be used as long as the content satisfies the guiding principles:
 - Universal - for all human beings in all space in all time
 - Logical - student should be able to discuss issues
 - Verifiable - student should be able to verify on one's own (on the basis of one's own Natural Acceptance and validation experientially in living)
 - Humanistic - Good of humanity
 - All encompassing - Touching all aspects of life
2. Foundation course can provide a large common base after which can be conducted elective courses, humanities projects, social internships etc.
3. MHRD can be requested to examine the model based on Jeevan Vidya vis-à-vis the guiding principles and consider it for widespread dissemination. It has been experimented on a large scale and the results are encouraging. Time has come to implement it broadly, by
 - a. Talking to various regulatory & accreditation bodies like UGC, AICTE, MCI & NAC as well as universities.
 - b. Holding workshop in various cities on VE.

4. MHRD may support research in the area of universal human values by providing the guidelines and process for
 - a. Junior Research Fellowship in Universal Human Values
 - b. PhD in Universal Human Values
 - c. Post Doctoral Fellowship in Universal Human Values
5. MHRD can further provide the requisite thrust to universal human value education by
 - a. Developing Centers of Excellence in Value Education in technical universities (like NRCVVEE was established at IIT Delhi)
 - b. Developing Resource Centers for Value Education in general universities
6. MHRD can set up an advisory or monitoring committee for the above activities with people who have been actively working for universal human values.
7. Teachers should be prepared for universal human value education. Universities and organisations like NITTTR should run teacher training for universal human values and prepare a cadre of such teachers
 - a. Regular teachers (who are teaching already)
 - b. PG Students (future teachers – catch them young)
 - c. Adjunct faculty (interested alumni, faculty spouses, enthusiastic people in society, retired people etc.)
8. Universities & accreditation bodies should duly reward the value competence of students, teachers and staff.
9. Start embedding VE in every subject (“VE Inside”). Initiation of R&D work for overall curricular modification, development of resource material and evolving alternative models in the light of right understanding.

Encl: Detailed Program (Updated) of conference