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'Quality of education at higher levels is crucial'

From Our Staff Reporter

CHENNAI, Jan. 31.

Changes in the structural relationship between universities and colleges are required to tackle the challenges facing higher education in the country, Dr. G. D. Sharma, Secretary, University Grants Commission (UGC), said today.

As part of reforming the relationship, teachers should be permitted to decide the syllabi they want to teach their students. Similarly, students should be given choices in selecting subjects.

Dr. Sharma was inaugurating a two-day seminar on higher education in India — relevance and challenges, organised here by the Department of Arts and Commerce of Stella Maris College on the occasion of the institution's golden jubilee celebrations.

The changes were also needed to rectify certain distortions like low number of working days in colleges. In many cases, the total number of teaching days in a year was not more than 100 or 115. If the teaching process was not rigorous, what kind of capabilities would students acquire, he asked.

On the overall scenario of higher education in the country, he said about six per cent of the country's population in the age group of 20 to 24 years entered the portals of higher education, which did not stand comparison internationally. In the U.S., the figure was 60 per cent. The country's base in higher education needed to be widened. Hence, the complacency about higher education was dangerous.

More than quantitative growth, the quality of education imparted to students at higher levels was crucial. Besides, concept that the State should continue to support higher education though the concept of community participation was gaining currency.

Dr. Annamma Philip, Principal, Stella Maris College, said educationists should focus sharply

on revamping the education system so that the process of learning became more meaningful. Dr. Flavia, Vice-principal, proposed a vote of thanks.