

**SEMINAR ON "CURRENT TRENDS IN INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATION  
IN THE CONTEXT OF THE NEW EDUCATION POLICY OF THE  
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA – AN APPRAISAL"  
(A sponsored programme of United Board)**

**Dates: 2, 3, 4 June, 2016  
Venue: AIACHE Ecumenical House, New Delhi**

## **REPORT**

AIACHE hosted a UB sponsored Principals' Seminar on "Current Trends in Indian Higher Education in the Context of the New Education Policy of Government – An Appraisal". Thirty participants, most of whom are Principals from AIACHE member institutions, actively took part in it. It was a three- day seminar from 2<sup>nd</sup> June to 4<sup>th</sup> June, 2016 held at the AIACHE Ecumenical House, Janakpuri, New Delhi. In addition to focusing on the evolution of the New Education Policy of the Government of India the seminar provided a platform to the participants to have an interface with the National Commission of Minority Educational Institutions, New Delhi. As most of the colleges are in the process of preparation of NAAC accreditation, the participants were provided with additional inputs to enhance the functioning of IQAC (Internal Quality Assurance Cell) and SQAC (Students Quality Assurance Cell). In order to understand the importance of integrating the skill development programme into mainline university courses a session on "skilling India" was earmarked for this purpose.

All the three days' proceedings were preceded by a devotion led by Prof. S. Thiagukumar, UB-Liaison, AIACHE on The Power of Speech (James 3:1-12), The Power of Listening (James 1:17-27) and the Power of Thought (Phil 4:4-13). The

greatest source of empowerment is a slew of gifts – speech, listening and thought – unique to humanity. He addressed the participants to fill their mind with a Godly thought life as what is put into minds determines what comes out in words and actions.



In Session I Dr. Daniel Ezhilarasu, the General Secretary of AIACHE welcomed the gathering conveying his delight for the presence of the participants, he outlined the objectives of the seminar. As one of the main stake-holders, the leadership of the higher educational institutions needs to make its voice considered by the Government. Pointing out the steps already taken by AIACHE in this regard, he pleaded the participants to actively participate in the dialogue in addition to making use of the opportunity to meet with officials from NCMEI, UGC, DST etc.



Rev. Dr. Maher Spurgeon in his introduction of United Board and its programmes conveyed his happiness in joining hands with AIACHE in holding this seminar at this crucial point. Introducing UB as a 90 year old Foundation started in the USA to help colleges in China, spread its ministry to other parts of Asia including India from 1971. Its four fold focus includes Leadership Development, faculty improvement, community partnership and inter-religious initiatives. In addition to providing institutional grants and funding for AULP, SPRD and UB Fellow Programmes, it helps Christian colleges to send proposals to ASHA, USAID etc. by serving as a nodal agent. He promised all help to colleges provided the project proposals are in order. In the ensuing discussion the participants came out with suggestions such as:

- i. every college has a professional group for preparing project proposal
- ii. ready for hard work and
- iii. train teachers in writing project manuals



Session II and III on 2<sup>nd</sup> June, 2016 focused on the New Education Policy and Skilling India and the resource person was Rev. Dr. Xavier Alphonse s.j. former Principal of Loyola College, Chennai.



### **All Roads Lead to Crossroads**

An Executive Member and a person who has a long association with AIACHE, he urged the members to have a sense of history and mission. Appreciating AIACHE especially the present General Secretary Dr. Daniel Ezhilarasu, he traced the different stages of the revival of the mission of AIACHE in the last five years. As an All India Organization, the only of its kind, celebrating its Golden Jubilee it has to focus on three important areas:

- i. Every College has a plan for important areas
- ii. Discuss issues related to higher education at local, regional and national level
- iii. Provide avenues to member institutions to raise funds.

After giving an overview of the New Education Policy, a brief history and summary of the themes (participants were provided with the hard copies) and issues, Fr. Alphonse urged the audience that we need to be aware of the fact that the fundamental rights of the Constitution should be preserved and protected as the New Education Policy seems to be moving towards the Corporate, commercialization and communal polarization. The five values – dignity of every citizen, social justice, equality, equity and inclusivity – enshrined in the Constitution must be upheld and protected. The New Education Policy should not only help institutions churn out graduates, doctors and engineers in large quantities but should give emphasis on quality.

Rev. Dr. Fr. Alphonse regrets that every aspect of higher education is not crossroads. The primary objectives of character formation, creative and critical self expression, personal development and ability to earn are at crossroads. The focus seems to be only on 'ability to earn'. Therefore our role as an important stakeholder is to swim against the current humanness over market, service over commodity, public funding over private funding and quality over quantity.

### **Q & A**

After reminding the participants about the current scenario of the Indian higher

education, they were given five questions and in groups of five they came out with the suggestions. The questions pertaining to creation of quality teachers, counter measures to the detrimental policy of the Government, AIACHE, as the single voice of the Christian institution and proposal for innovative projects of UB are discussed.



### **Merit – the Primary Means**

All the five groups have come out with idea that there should be a comprehensive merit based staff appointment policy be adhered to. A staff development programme including orientation to the new staff, periodical refresher courses, short and long will go a long way to improve the teaching-learning enhancing the quality. Similarly a comprehensive periodical teacher evaluation focusing on value addition is sure to enhance the quality. Networking of resources - human and material and inter-institutional faculty exchange to share the best practices will also supplement other efforts. IQAC, SQAC need to be strengthened.





## **Christian Witness**

Gospel values to be practiced at all stages of the functioning from admission of students. Preference should be given to the socially and economically marginalized both from the rural and urban pockets. In addition to extending admission to the academically weak, empowerment programmes such as remedial courses, courses in English communication. Computer literacy, life skills and soft skills programmes will help them to join with the main stream. A full pledged value education programme with syllabus, teaching methodology, evaluation, practical components be made mandatory. Proper management of resources – human and material, scholarship to the deserving, earn while you learn, share and care and welfare schemes to help the underprivileged including women will transform our institutions into centres of peace, justice and harmony.

## **Response**

Creating awareness by sharing the right kind of information is sure to bring people to exercise solidarity. The participants agreed upon public relation exercise to raise our dissent through media, parents

and alumni and by meeting representatives of all political parties. Collective unified response to issues and meaningful protest if need be in addition to continuous interaction with the authorities are sure to help us achieve our goals.

## **The Road Ahead**

Successful Membership campaign, appointment of regional coordinators will definitely augment resource, enhancing the quality of the programmes of AIACHE. Earmarking space in AIACHE website for member institutions and by marketing them can help AIACHE generate resources. Member institutions look upto AIACHE as an agent of advocacy and lobbying on important issues specially in relation to higher education.

## **Greater Collaboration**

Partnering with AIACHE, an All India ecumenical organization, UB is expected to reach out to greater number of Christian colleges to implement its four fold objectives of achieving whole person education. Thrust areas are value education, inter-religious faith, ICT promotion, tribal and indigenous culture, preservation of natural resources etc.

## **Academic Audit for Quality Enhancement**

The second day's proceedings were primarily on the functioning of variables which help institutions for a comprehensive and fair evaluation focussing on value addition. Dr. Prantik Banerjee, Associate Professor of English and NAAC Coordinator, Hislop College,

Nagpur dwelt on 'Quality Assurance – Students Participation in Academic and Administrative Audit (AAA). Calling for more weightage to students' feedback, Dr. Prantik reminded the Heads of Institutions the different roles played by the students in our campuses – apprentice, consumer, co-producer, active participant and partner. Hence he recommends the involvement of students at three levels: co-production of knowledge and skills, co-governance and co-evaluation and assessment of quality. Moreover they are the largest and main stake holder. The well informed, motivated and participative students in addition to fostering quality can carry the campus concerns to the community and vice versa. Quoting 2006 NAAC declaration, he called for greater participation of students in quality enhancement. Student leaders can be encouraged to form 'quality circles' from suggestion box to discussion circle. There can be easy access and frequent interaction between IQAC and student council/SQAC. Students can prepare a separate Student Representative Report (SRR) to be submitted before the NAAC Peer Team.

### **Students and Q.A**

Students participation in quality assurance can be both internal and external. Student representatives may be included in the decision making bodies such as IQAC, SQAC and Staff and Student Consultative Committees. Feedback on courses, teachers and campus experience through questionnaire can be collected and incorporated. Grievance Redressal, internal and external student satisfaction surveys and alumni feedback are sure to give fair representation in the process of

accreditation. Though it is difficult to promote an active role of students in a world of experts, training programme for such students including group activity, case study, presentation, report drafting and interface meetings will motivate them. Inviting AIACHE to act as a nodal resource centre, Dr. Prantik recommends that student participation in an academic audit will create a ripple effect leading to quality culture.

### **From the Corridors**

Dr. Alfred Cecil Raj, Dean, St. Joseph College, Tiruchirapalli and Dr. Sr. Eugene Fatima Mary, Principal, Auxilium College, Vellore and Dr. Beulah Suresh, Associate Professor, Auxilium College, Vellore in their presentation symbolically traced out that creativity and innovation should be the hallmark of all aspects of accreditation process. Evolution of school systems by integrating departments helped St. Joseph's College to customize and innovate in order to offer interdisciplinary programmes. Dr. Alfred pointed out that a comprehensive feedback mechanism either enhances or sustains quality. Periodical feedback has to culminate in annual feedback from all stakeholders including parents, students and the management.





Dr. Sr. Eugene Fatima Mary insisted that day to day documentation of every activity and autonomy (all round) to each department really help in enhancing the quality. Auxilium College, situated in a rural pocket, designs ICT programmes, bridge courses, value education programmes (its own publication), thereby provides better opportunity to its wards. Celebration of Diamond Jubilee provides the college to display the talents and programmes to reach out to the world outside.

### **Quality - Absolute or Relative**

The presentation of day 2 was followed by group discussion and presentation of group reports. The groups deliberated on quality and its aspects, ways and means of promoting quality, stages in the preparation of NAAC, understanding academic audit and the fifth question was the reasons for promoting AIACHE as an agent of accreditation.

### **The Outcome**

According to the participants quality needs to be understood as wholistic raising one's own standard of standard of competency in relation to curriculum, extra and co-

curricular programmes. It's both absolute and relative but more of the former. Quality is measurable and continuous, sets higher benchmark and is relevant. Formation of 'Quality Circles' at the curricular, co and extra-curricular and infrastructural level, strengthening of quality indicators such as IQAC, SQAC, TQM and evaluation through internal and external audit will enhance and promote quality. By involving all the stakeholders to generate ideas, suggestions, implementation of quality enhancement programmes will lead to better result. The stages of NAAC preparation depend upon the cycle of accreditation of the colleges. The stages are (chronological) formation IQAC, Recommendation of the Peer Team to become the Agenda of IQAC for implementation. Plan for 5 years with a theme for each year, regular meeting of the IQAC 3 in a year and 2 in a year with the external, annual AQAR to be uploaded and shared with the members, classification of documents, fulfilling the requirements of green audit, Academic audit etc., upload SSR, LOI with documents and mock NAAC. Academic audit relates to an evaluation of all that belongs to academic matters starting from admission of students, recruitment of staff, curriculum design, examination, faculty assessment, co-curricular, extra-curricular and extension activities.

The idea of promoting AIACHE to an accreditation agency is appreciated by one and all as it enjoys all the wherewithal and reputation. Accreditation can be more objective, as present system is accused of being subjective. If not a viable alternative, AIACHE can be another evaluation agency stopping the monopoly of a single body. Moreover the number of



Universities and colleges are many and they are forced to wait for their turn. By promoting this cause, the expertise, talents spread in the member institutions are pooled together for a noble cause.



The two sessions of the third day generated a lot of discussions as they dealt with the legal issues faced by the Christian minority institutions. Dr. M.S. Narasimhan, advocate, made a presentation on "Legal Issues faced by Christian Minority Institutions". Quoting extensively from the Constitution of India, he drew the attention of the participants to Article 30(1) which provides the right to 'establish and administer institutions'.

### **Interface with NCMEI**

An interface with Shri Zafar Agha, Hon'ble Member, National Commission for Minority Educational Institutions provided a wonderful opportunity to the Heads of member institutions to clarify many of their long pending doubts. This acting Chairman and senior member of the NCMEI enlightened the congregation the necessity of seeking legal redressal to most of their issues as almost all the Christian minority institutions think twice before seeking legal remedy. Pointing out

the objectives of constituting a Minority Commission in 2004, he brought to the members the fact that all their rights flow from Article 30(1) of the Constitution of India. He answered all the queries raised by the members and promised to extend all possible counsel to the minority institutions especially in getting the all important Minority Status Certificate.



The Valedictory Session served as a plenary wherein all the participants gave their idea of Christian college based on the presentation, deliberation and group discussion of the last three days. A consolidated vision of true Christian institution will have the following characteristics.



## Vision Envisaged

- Design programmes – curricular, co-curricular, extra-curricular – to achieve academic excellence.
- Promote transparency at all levels
- Focus on character formation, creative and critical self-expression, personality development and ability to earn.
- Identify in clear terms with the poor, marginalized, women and those who are on the peripherals and provide opportunity for empowerment.
- Prepare students for life by imparting value education, life skills and skills to argument additional resource mobilization.
- Create stewards so as to manage well their God given resources.
- Transform campuses into a centre devoid of any form of discrimination – caste, gender, race, religion etc.
- Prepare students to be agents of social change.
- Develop the real human attributes in everybody so as to transform the world into a place of love, harmony and peace.



In the valedictory the participations unanimously thanked AIACHE and UB for giving them such a training which would definitely help them in their mission as leaders. Dr. Punitha Ezhilarasu, Consultant Indian Nursing Council and beloved wife of Dr. Daniel Ezhilarasu appreciated the Principals for taking leave of their regular work to be a part of this important programme. She was delighted to distribute the certificate to the participants. The three day seminar came to close by the prayer offered by Rev. Dr. V.M. Spurgeon, Programme Director for the South Asia, United Board.

