

EDITORIAL

A University for Sustainable Development

On 2nd and 3rd March 2013, a national workshop was held at the Gramodaya Post Graduate College and Research Institute in Amarpurkashi (Uttar Pradesh). The topic for the workshop was a proposal to set up a university for sustainable development.

The workshop was a great success. Participants wholeheartedly approved of the proposal and accepted the concept of a university for sustainable development presented by Mukat Singh. Moreover, they extended their ownership to the concept and to the experiments that would form part of the university, particularly in the initial stages.

It is true that there are thousands of universities and colleges all over India with more being established every day. At the same time, many of them are now closing for lack of students. So why another university?

Workshop participants agreed that the present system is not preparing students for a productive and responsible life. There was considerable discussion on the defects of the present system. Participants agreed that it is divisive, it does not equip students with the knowledge and skills they need, it is not neutral or environmentally sustainable, it supports the status quo, it breeds selfishness and arrogance and raises false expectations which students think must be fulfilled by any means. In any case, this system is one that was imposed on India by the British rulers because it suited their purposes. It does not serve the needs of a democratic society in the 21st century.

The basic purpose of a university is the advancement of knowledge through research and innovation, the diffusion of knowledge through teaching and learning and the extension of knowledge through application, testing and

publication. True knowledge should liberate people from the shackles of their limitations.

In the university for sustainable development, research will be practical, participative, collaborative and critical; it will focus on the lives of ordinary people; it will aim to make advancements that will benefit the weak, vulnerable and needy and through this, lead to the advancement of all. The teaching will focus on disseminating knowledge and skills that are useful to all but particularly to the villagers who still form 70% of India's population. It will be practical as well as holistic, developing personal and life skills together with specific knowledge.

Courses will not be run just for the sake of it. They will only run when there is a need and demand. They will be vocational as well as academic, part as well as full time, short and long term, accredited and non accredited.

The buildings that are such a big part of universities in India today will not be important in this new university nor will they always be necessary. At present, universities prescribe a certain number of buildings of a certain size regardless of whether or not they are necessary or ever used. A university for sustainable development will only construct buildings where necessary and will use them sensibly. Many practical and on-the-job courses will not need buildings at all.

Some of the present popular courses may also be run but with the addition of modules which will re-orient students to develop their decision-making, problem-solving and thinking faculties as well as their sense of responsibility, creativity, logic and critical analysis.

Mukat Singh aims to begin with some experimental and innovative projects such as zero waste, making use of unused resources

and sensible use of resources. One project would include tree-planting, medicinal plants and nurseries, drip irrigation, integrated use of wind and solar energy and inclusive farming with dairy and goat-keeping. This could lead to the loaning of cows, buffaloes and goats to the poor on easy terms.

New courses will be developed based on the knowledge acquired through these practical projects while research will be carried out to enhance the economy of various aspects of the projects. Environmental sustainability will be an essential part of all these courses.

The workshop concluded with the participants' approval and full support of the establishment of such a university and with the sincere wish that the government would support this important endeavour and in doing so, foster local, rural knowledge which would build sustainable, rural economies for the larger public good.

Filename: Editorial - A University for Sustainable Development.docx
Directory: E:\Documents
Template: C:\Users\Janet
Wilson\AppData\Roaming\Microsoft\Templates\Normal.dotm

Title:

Subject:

Author: NC Admin

Keywords:

Comments:

Creation Date: 12/03/2013 15:06:00

Change Number: 5

Last Saved On: 01/01/2014 17:45:00

Last Saved By: Janet Wilson

Total Editing Time: 3 Minutes

Last Printed On: 01/01/2014 17:46:00

As of Last Complete Printing

Number of Pages: 2

Number of Words: 657 (approx.)

Number of Characters: 3,750 (approx.)