

**HIGHER EDUCATION CELL, CENTRE FOR STUDY OF CULTURE AND SOCIETY,  
BANGALORE**

**Social Justice in Higher Education Initiative**

**Ford Pathways Programme – Second Annual Workshop for Faculty**

**Dates: February 28 and March 1, 2011**

The Pathways to Higher Education programme is one of the key projects of the Higher Education Cell at CSCS, and is currently being implemented in nine undergraduate colleges across three states (Maharashtra, Kerala and Karnataka) in India. This four-year pilot programme seeks to enhance quality of access to higher education through skill-building for socially disadvantaged students, along with teacher training in curricular and pedagogic reform so as to ease the integration of these students into the mainstream. The programme is presently in its second year, and activities completed so far include nine student workshops on new technologies and social media, two workshops for faculty on social justice issues and new pedagogic strategies, and a number of diversity-related campus initiatives, conducted by the colleges themselves.

The second annual workshop for faculty from the nine undergraduate colleges in this programme was organized on February 28 and March 1, 2011, at the CSCS premises in Bangalore. This workshop was the second in a series of four annual workshops to be conducted as part of the research and training for faculty in the Pathways Programme. The focus this year was on development of new pedagogic strategies and curricular innovation in the context of social justice and diversity. This included detailed sessions on the use of media and technology in research and pedagogy to address questions of inequity and access. New faculty members, mostly from Humanities/Social Sciences were nominated by the colleges for the workshop, but it was a mixed group as some of the old teachers came this year as well. The long-term objective is to create a larger network of undergraduate teachers, across disciplines, through these workshops. Apart from issues related to existing efforts to re-invent methods of classroom teaching and rethink curricula, a key point of discussion was the campus activities and research initiatives to be undertaken as part of the programme.

**Day 1**

The first day commenced with an introduction to the Higher Education Cell by Dr. Tejaswini Niranjana, largely for the benefit of the new members. Dr. Niranjana gave an overview of the Cell and its activities in five thematic areas. She moved on to the main theme of the workshop, which was knowledge production and revitalization of the sector of higher education by addressing problems at various levels – students, teachers and institutions. More importantly, she focused on the need to make new knowledge relevant to the emerging needs of the sector, by improving the quality of resources produced, and strengthening skills of students and teachers. She also emphasized the undergraduate college as an important space of this change, which will lead to qualitative transformation of the sector.

Dr. Milind Wakanar highlighted the importance of creating new modes of knowledge production through building research capacity, especially in the undergraduate space. The campus as a space can be made more responsive to the changes taking place around it if problem solving at the level of citizenship building and direct social action as a way of change can be encouraged. Building research capacity is a crucial aspect of inculcating a critical stance towards one's

socio-political contexts, to encourage learning and action, and there is a need to envisage the campus, especially the undergraduate college campus as a space where such change can take place.

Unlike the seminar mode adopted last year, the structure of the workshop was modified this year to include more group activities and discussions. The teachers were thus divided into two groups for a more intense discussion on specific topics. The groups and topics were as follows:

**Group 1: Compiling Teaching Modules for Working with Urban Youth Groups and Civil Society: Problem Solving in Local Issues**

This group consisted of faculty members from Ahmednagar College, SIES College, St. Xavier's College, Farook College and St. Aloysius College. The CSCS faculty resource person was Dr. SV Srinivas.

Dr. Srinivas began the session with a brief introduction to the topic, where he emphasized that the objective was to look at how to translate awareness about social issues into critical thinking in the classroom, rather than to evolve strategies for direct political action. He then put forth some questions for discussion such as: how does the domain of experience or daily political action become the subject of classroom teaching, what is the notion of citizenship rights that students have; are there impediments to access these rights, such as caste, class, gender and religion and what could be possible solutions. The teachers responded with various instances of existing student involvement with civil society issues, institutional measures for social outreach and how these could be bettered, and the possible impact this could have on the classroom. The problem of internal differences within the classroom was a crucial one, and many teachers found that it is an impediment to learning. Several possible solutions were suggested such as innovation in the existing curricula and new pedagogic strategies, and a focus on generating local knowledge as a way to foster student involvement in social action.

**Group 2: Compiling Teaching Modules for Team Learning about Locally Available Archival Sources**

This group consisted of faculty members from UC College, Newman College, Dr. AV Baliga College and Vidhyavardhaka College, Mysore. The CSCS faculty resource person was Ashish Rajadhyaksha.

The session began by looking at the nature and quality of archival resources that are available for use in undergraduate colleges, and their relevance in specific regional contexts. Digitisation of resources was a key area of focus, and some of the colleges shared their experiences about being part of Government-aided initiatives like the INFLIBNET supported N-LIST Programme. The prevalence of internet usage in colleges was discussed in detail; many teachers felt that access is still a crucial issue. While the institutions have managed to address this problem, some of the teachers also highlighted the importance of creating a need-based environment around the Internet, failing which they were not inclined to use new media tools for academic purposes. A possible solution suggested was the dovetailing of internet based tools in the existing curriculum and inculcating this in classroom teaching. Ashwin Kumar stressed on the need to look at local resources, produced in regional languages as effective pedagogic resources. He also cited the example of one of the materials production projects in the HEC's Regional Language Resources initiative, emphasizing the need to produce publicly useful and

locally relevant knowledge. Other related issues such as quality of institutional inputs in knowledge generation were also discussed.

Post-lunch, the teachers re-grouped again to discuss the activities in the Pathways programme, specifically in the light of the morning session. The focus of this discussion was to evaluate the activities completed so far, and to look at possibilities of improvement in the second year. The teachers shared their experiences about the campus initiatives; the process of planning and implementation, and the involvement of the students in these activities. Several teachers had positive feedback about the campus initiatives, particularly about the Pathways Cells as a friendly space that has fostered much peer-to – peer interaction. However, several colleges also mentioned a lack of motivation among students to be part of programmes, due to academic and other social pressures, and also minor institutional issues which have prevented effective implementation of all the activities as planned. It was generally felt that there was a need for some synergy among all the activities, so that there is feasibility in implementation and a consolidated outcome at the end of the year, which would reflect the learnings from the project. The HEC suggested that this could be achieved by modifying the structure of the campus initiatives, to focus on a year-long single project with a concrete outcome/deliverable, and conduct smaller activities such as talks, conferences, and workshops as modalities of this project. The deliverable could be anything such as a journal, street play, seminar or documentary film focusing on social justice/diversity. Nishant Shah from the Centre for Internet and Society brought in the community-building and peer-to-peer networking aspects of the programme, and mooted a new model for the communication and skill-building component which would also help synergise the three levels of intervention in the programme as a whole.

In the last session, all the participants got back together to share the reports of their respective group discussions, which also included ideas for the campus activities to be taken up next year. It was decided that the new structure of working on one long-term project for the year would be taken up as part of the campus initiatives next year to improve quality and aid better implementation. Some of the key issues discussed during the day were reiterated, particularly the need for better and innovative methods to tackle issues in classroom teaching; increased sensitivity toward the concerns articulated by students and factoring those into the conceptualization of campus initiatives; and lastly the need to question not just the way in which knowledge is produced, but also diffused and travels in different contexts. It was unanimously agreed that there is the need for a model which will take into account these various factors concerning knowledge production in the undergraduate space.

## **Day 2**

The first session was on 'Developing New Pedagogic Tools/Resources from Visual Media'. The session began with a presentation by Namita Malhotra from the Alternative Law Forum, Bangalore. The CSCS faculty resource person was Dr. S.V Srinivas. Namita began her presentation with a demonstration of PAD.MA - short for Public Access Digital Media Archive - an online archive of densely text-annotated video material, primarily footage and not finished films. The entire collection is searchable and viewable online, and is free to download for non-commercial use. Descriptions, keywords and other annotations are placed on timelines by both archive contributors and users. Namita compared this format to YouTube and Wikipedia as other media which allow for such collaborative exercises. The group then discussed the possibilities of using such tools as part of classroom teaching. The access question was again discussed at length. Another crucial point was about the importance of archiving and the need to annotate and preserve original materials better for future reference. A key focus of the session was also on the sense of community that is created through the use of tools such as Pad.ma, which fosters peer-to-peer learning and engagement.

Nishant Shah conducted the next session on 'Problem-solving as a Digital Native (Communication Skills and Democratic Reflexes)'. Nishant emphasized the need to look at technology as a paradigm rather than just a tool, especially in the present context where the Internet has come to dominate the way we think about technology and social media today. He elaborated on the processes of virtualization and digitization, explaining the difference between the two, and stressed on how the latter can be translated into physical processes that can be brought into classroom teaching, as envisioned in the case of the digital classroom of the future. Using examples of different websites such as Wikipedia, Digg, E-how, Twitter, Wiki leaks, Spezify, Stumble upon, Couch-surfing and others he demonstrated the manner in which collaborative exercises on the internet can foster a sense of community among students. He also stressed the importance of archiving, and the need to build an information network through a culture of sharing and trust. The group discussed the possibilities of bringing in these tools into the classroom, through the Pathways activities.

The workshop ended with a concluding discussion on the key points discussed over the two days and the new structure of campus initiatives to be undertaken by the colleges in the next year. Overall, the workshop was a useful exercise in bringing new faculty members into the programme and helping them interact with each other, and setting the pace for the programme in the next year.

### **List of Participants**

The following faculty members from the selected nine colleges under Pathways programme participated in the workshop.

1. St. Aloysius College, Mangalore: Fr. Richard Rego and Ms. Praveena Cardoza
2. Dr. A.V. Baliga College, Kumta: Dr. M.G. Hegde and Mrs. Pratibha Bhat
3. Vidhyavardhaka College, Mysore: Dr.P Gangadhara and Dr. B S Shriharsha
4. St. Xavier's College, Mumbai: Prof. Sangeetha Chavan and Ms. Rashmi Lee George
5. SIES,Mumbai : Professor Asha gala and Mr. Abuzar Ansari
6. Ahmednagar College, Ahmednagar: Dr. Simen Barnabus and Prof. Anand Raikwad.
7. Farook College, Kozhikode : Abdul Majeed. T and Mr. Abdul Azeez,
8. Union Christian College, Aluva: Ms Geethika and Ms. Nino Baby
9. Newman College, Thodupuzha: Prof. Ravi K Pillai and Prof. PA Jose

**From the Centre for Internet and Society - Nishant Shah (Director - Research, CIS)**

**From the Alternative Law Forum – Namita Malhotra**

**From the Centre for the Study of Culture and Society**

1. Ashish Rajadhyaksha (Senior Fellow and Director, CSCS )
2. Dr. Tejaswini Niranjana ( Lead Researcher, H E Cell and Senior Fellow, CSCS)
3. Dr. Milind Wakankar ( Initiative Head, HE Cell and Fellow, CSCS)
4. Dr. S. V Srinivas (Lead Researcher, CIDASIA and Senior Fellow, CSCS)
5. Ashwin Kumar AP ( Programme Coordinator, HE Cell and Doctoral Student, CSCS)
6. Sai Kothai and Sneha P.P ( Programme Associates, HE Cell)