



National Council of Rural Institutes

Department of Higher Education,
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TO FACILITATE QUALITY LEARNING

NCRI Joins Hands with Telangana University



Telangana University is the second State University to collaborate with NCRI, following Mahatma Gandhi University.

With an objective to promote rural community engagement of students as part of the education, the National Council of Rural Institutes (NCRI) entered into a Memorandum of Understanding on 11th August with the Telangana University at Dichpally, Nizamabad.

This MoU will facilitate inclusion of aspects relating to rural community engagement of students in the curriculum of various subjects and will also help promote disaster risk resilience in rural areas. MoU papers were exchanged by NCRI chairperson W G Prasanna Kumar and TU Vice-Chancellor P Sambaiah in the presence of Registrar B. Vidya Vardhini and NCRI Member Secretary R. Manoj Kumar.

Speaking on the occasion, NCRI chairman W G Prasanna Kumar said that the Council had entered into MoUs with 14 universities, including 13 Central universities across the country. “It is the

time that we bring the villages into our classrooms and take classrooms into the villages,” he added. Elaborating the concept, he stated that the academic world should take a rural perspective to ameliorate conditions there. It is important that students get exposure to rural issues with an aim to learn from and to contribute to the addressing of rural concerns.

TU Vice-Chancellor P Sambaiah hailed the agreement as a big step in the direction of the revamp of the syllabus in tune with rural needs. “It is high time that the curriculum reflects the rural issues and helps develop responses to the challenges that plague rural areas,” he added.

He stated that syllabus of various courses would soon be modified to give priority to rural issues and concerns of rural masses. “NCRI has a great role to play in the revamp of the syllabus

to make it more application oriented in terms of rural concerns,” Professor Sambaiah said. “It’s an immeasurable initiative by NCRI to bring out the challenges of rural India and collaborating it with education,” said Prof B Vidya Vardhini Registrar, Telangana University.

NCRI member secretary R. Manoj Kumar stated that the Council would soon conduct a workshop for the teachers of various disciplines and would facilitate the inclusion of inputs in the curriculum of subjects. He explained that the NCRI would extend scholarships and grants to researchers, faculty members, and students to carry out research on rural issues. 45 faculty members from various departments par-

ticipated in the roundtable discussion on modalities of conducting a two-day workshop for curriculum development, curriculum standardization along with curriculum accreditation for a two-credit course for NSS and other students were discussed. The disciplines identified for coverage under community engagement were Social Work, Education, Mass Communication, Rural Tourism, Rural Development, Rural Management, Rural Entrepreneurship, Rural Studies and NSS as core paper.

NCRI programme coordinator JP Shastry, NSS coordinator Praveena Bai, MoU coordinator Kankata Raja Ram, UGC coordinator Vasam Chandra Shekar and other faculty members were present.

NCRI’s Strategies for the Future

A slew of strategies are felt necessary by the NCRI team to enhance the entire gamut of activities of the Council. These strategies, if prioritised and implemented, would help invigorate the process of curricular interventions embarked upon by the NCRI. They will also help the Council in facilitating enduring liaison between the communities and the campuses. In other words, the wherewithal of the NCRI for capacity building will be sharpened.

The NCRI team has further decided to organize conferences with the Vice Chancellors of all Central Universities (region wise). A national conference with the Vice Chancellors of all Central universities at New Delhi, presided over by the Minister of Human Resources Development, Government of India need also to be held on Community-University engagement.

It is in this direction that the NCRI plans to conduct a three-day national conference in collaboration with the central universities on “Mainstreaming Rural Concerns

into Higher Education-Issues and Strategies”. The Team has planned for a meeting with the Directors of all the IIMs to discuss the proposal of incorporating ‘Rural Entrepreneurship’ as an elective paper into the curriculum. Simultaneously, a meeting with the Directors of all IITs to discuss the proposal of incorporating rural development concerns into the curriculum is also proposed.

In the attempt to make the Rural Immersion Programme more effective, NCRI plans for a meeting with the departments of Social Work of all central universities to chalk out an action plan for organizing RIC programs at regular intervals in different parts of the Country.

It was also planned that a meeting with the departments of Management studies of central universities, Marketing and Cooperative Societies of several state governments and credit societies need to be organized to get inputs for the curriculum on ‘Rural entrepreneurship’. All such strategies are expected to achieve the objectives of the Council.

Hiware Bazaar: An Oasis in Desert



Papatroa Pawar, the Superman of Hiware Bazaar Village

The residents of Hiware Bazaar, a remote village in the Ahmednagar district of the state of Maharashtra have managed to turn their fortune around in the span of just a few years – they’ve gone from being a drought-stricken populace in the mid-1990s to the richest village in the nation today. Their story is a truly inspiring one.

Hiware Bazaar currently boasts of having the highest GDP among all the villages in India. Every year, their fields yield bountiful crops of millets, onions, and potatoes that make it hard to imagine that only a few years ago they were barren stretches of land.

Yet, up until the mid 90s, Hiware Bazaar was indeed a poverty-stricken village reeling in the aftermath of a severe drought in 1972. Frustrated with the situation, lots of villagers

moved to nearby towns and cities in search of odd jobs as laborers, despite owning several acres of land, back home. About 90 percent of the population moved out, and those remaining had no prospects.

In 1989 a young man named Papatroa Pawar, the only villager with a graduate degree was unanimously elected as sarpanch. Pawar decided that the time had come for Hiware Bazaar to shine.

One of the first things Pawar did as sarpanch was to convince the villagers to close down about 22 liquor shops. Giving up one of the only things that brought them comfort, or at least an illusion of it, was not easy, but they eventually agreed.

The new leader then arranged for loans to poor farmers from the Bank of Maharashtra and used some of the funds to start projects that would eventually improve the

water supply in the region. Pawar started rainwater harvesting and water conservations schemes and got the villagers to build 52 earthen bunds, 32 stone bunds, two percolation tanks and nine check dams.

The projects worked. Although Hiware Bazaar only received 15 inches of annual rainfall, the ponds and trenches they built saved every single drop water, preventing it from flowing out of the village. After just one monsoon, the irrigation area increased from 50 acres to 170 hectares. As the groundwater level began to rise, so did the villagers’ morale.

With the water shortage resolved, many people who had left the village began to return. The number of families slowly went up from 90 to 235. The people were happier, collaborated more often, and addressed challenges together. Pawar set up systems so that two to three families could help each other on their farms, fostering a sense of community and avoiding the cost of hiring laborers. Today, they are able to harvest multiple crops, even taming and ploughing stubborn and rocky land for farming.

Hiware Bazaar is now a model village, with a growing sense of discipline and order. The roads are clean and well-planned, cement houses have long replaced the derelict huts of old, liquor and tobacco have been banned, as have open defecation and urination. Every single house has a toilet, a fact that cannot be applied to most villages in India, and people are genuinely happy and proud of their achievements.

Enabavi, the Organic Village



Enabavi, a small village in Warangal district, Telangana has created history in its own right to ensure itself a place in the agrarian history of India. The entire village has about 55 families, 300 acres constituting the village's population of about 200 to become fully organic. This village is now free of pesticides, chemical fertilisers and genetically-modified crops. The village stands as a ray of hope in the midst of dark picture of agriculture indebtedness, meagre returns and increasing input costs.

Enabavi is the first village in the country to declare itself, chemical free. The accomplishment was not any sudden incident neither miracle. It took three years of determined efforts and priceless cooperation from the gritty farmers of the entire village.

Centre for Rural Operation Programmes Society (CROPS) a registered non-profit, non-governmental and social development grass root organization was established in the year 1991. It has as its main objective to serve poverty stricken and draught prone areas. CROPS works with rural communities with special focus on women, children, farmers and other vulnerable sections of the society in particular.

Initially it was difficult for CROPS to change the mindset of farmers that only pumping in lot of chemicals and growing High Yielding Variety crops could fetch higher yields. But our past successful history in dealing with dev-

astating attack of Red Hairy Caterpillars and continuous motivation from grass root level motivator Mr. Ponnammallaiah of the same village. Helped to gain confidence of the villagers and in the beginning we could convince 10 of the total 55 farmers and of course the rest is history.

Until the year 2001, like majority of farmers of the country, farmers of the Enabavi village were also heavily indebted to the local money lenders and are now free to invest on agriculture inputs without borrowing. Rice, tobacco, cotton, pulses, coarse grains, chillies and vegetables are grown in the village using locally available manure like cow dung, cattle droppings, decoction of tobacco and neem. Initially, the productivity fell marginally but has started picking up once again.

There is pride in Enabavi villagers as they explain to the perennial flow of scientists and other visitors as to why their village is an island of prosperity in Warangal district, otherwise notorious as the heartland of heavy pesticide use and farmers suicides. In the last five years, they have stopped using pesticides and chemical fertilisers and are now growing fully organic crops.

What is more important is they have declared that they won't grow genetically modified crops either. The villagers are all free from the stranglehold of money lenders; there is no migration in search of work and not a single farmer suicide death in the village.

Campus-Community 'Connect': Missing or Veiled?



The tragic weakness of the present school, wrote John Dewey, one of the most distinguished educationists, in his classic 'School and Society', "is that it endeavours to prepare future members of the social order in a medium in which the conditions of the social spirit are eminently wanting". His lament reflected the post-industrial society's worry about the real and perceived indifference of the university/college towards the community whom it was supposed to engage with. In some measure the problem persists throughout the world and India is no exception.

The higher education system in India, since colonial times, is designed to meet the educational and employment needs of the population. Its stated goal is transmitting knowledge which apparently enables the learners to acquire a range of skills, internalise certain values, get citizenship training, contribute to knowledge building and most importantly earn her/his livelihood. Succinctly put, education helps an individual grow into a well-rounded and employable citizen. Among the many objectives of education, attempting to explore alternatives to problems afflicting the society at large and local communities in particular is sociologically significant. The issue however is whether the institutions of learning-more specifically higher learning- have

intervened in the community amidst which they are located and operate- adequately. In other words the question is as to whether the education system has facilitated the empowerment of impoverished and marginalised rural communities as expected of it. The answer could be a muted 'yes' and a loud 'no'.

Though there are a number of programmes and initiatives that engage students in some kind of community service for around seven decades following independence, their impact on the local communities is too small and thinly spread to be quantified. The reasons are manifold. The very socialisation process in India emphasizes on individual achievement rather than sensitizing the child or youth to social concerns leading to the precedence of 'personal' over the 'collective'. This inward looking tutoring at home, school and neighbourhood and by kin group, albeit its best intentions, breeds a kind of nonchalance towards the social environs in the young minds which in turn is likely to disengage future citizens from active citizenship. Added to it is the excessive stress on building a lucrative career associated with esteem, which also leads to the neglect of civic participation. Despite the above institutional and systemic shortcomings, the educational apparatus in India has experimented noteworthy initiatives.

The most conspicuous among them is the National Service Scheme popularly known as NSS. The scheme introduced in 1969 by the Government of India, to mark the birth centenary of Mahatma Gandhi, involves student volunteers in community service with the lofty objective of enhancing their social perception. It is a comprehensive programme implemented through a plethora of activities aiming at the personality development of the student volunteer. While imparting experiential learning to the volunteers, it forges an effective and enduring link between the college and the community.

However the palpable decline of student participation in the programme is due to a host of factors among which the most important is the phenomenal growth of entertainment industry via technological revolution. Fierce competition in the job market and availability of numerous options which naturally motivate the youth to veer towards

a promising career rather than community service which may not fetch them tangible benefits.

It is in this backdrop the need to integrate civic and community based learning into the curriculum is strongly felt. The University Grants Commission (UGC), way back in 1985, declared extension to be the third dimension of higher education in addition to teaching and research. It is time a new system is formulated in which the fourth dimension of 'mutual empowerment' is added. The fourth dimension is the amalgam of transformative experience of the university/students and the empowering experience of the local community. It is also termed as 'engaged scholarship' leading to changes in policy and deepening of democracy. The curriculum aimed at civic engagement will have to incorporate new technologies and seek solutions to issues confronting the rural communities. This would unveil the 'connect' and demonstrate that it is not missing what is required.

All set for Rural Immersion Camp(RIC) in 10 villages of Telangana

In an attempt to engage and involve students in the rural life, the National Council of Rural Institutes (NCRI) in collaboration with University of Hyderabad (UoH) will conduct a 48-hour Rural Immersion Camp (RIC) for 200 students from UoH. The camp will commence from 1st September midday to 3rd September midday in 10 selected villages from the Rangareddy Dist of Telangana. These villages were selected from the list of remote villages identified by the Collector and District Magistrate Ranga Reddy, who is also an alumni of the UoH, M Raghunandan Rao. The selected villages are:

Lemur
Puli Mamidi
Mucherla
Nerrapalli
Thippaiguda
Japal
Kothapally
Urella
Chinchod
Siddapur

Schedule

Classroom orientation of 60 minutes with Q and A about the village visit precedes the visit

Day 1

- Village Transect Walk

Day 2

- Visit to village institutions
- Preparing the resource map, human resource map and seasonal maps
- Interaction with school children, youth and women SHGs
- Interaction with institutions in the village on rural livelihoods
- Interaction with cultural groups in the village
- Recap and one page reporting

Day 3

- Breakfast
- Survey of Socio, Economic, Health, Hygiene, Sanitation, Drinking Water Status of the village
- Interaction with the formal leadership in the village
- Recap
- Recap and writing report
- Leave the village

Rural Immersion Camp
-An Experiential Learning Opportunity

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The NCRI faculty and resource persons completed the pre-visits to these villages in order to ensure the logistics are in place, including food and accommodation facilities for the camping students.

NCRI celebrates Independence Day



The National Council of Rural Institutes celebrated the 70th Independence Day on 15 August 2017 with pride. The NCRI team reiterated its commitment to serve its mandate with diligence and commitment.

The Chairman NCRI Dr W G Prasanna Kumar said that the organization should strive to facilitate quality learning in Higher Educational Institutions and see to that the students have a hands-on learning experience of the village community rather than be confined to

the classroom learning. He also appealed that every academic of this country should work hard in making our nation 'Unnat Bharat with Uthkrishit Grams.' "As the country is celebrating Independence now let's take an oath to make rural India independent from the challenges faced by it," said Manoj Kumar Member Secretary NCRI.

The Chairman hoisted the tricolor in the presence of the NCRI staff.



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Rural Resilience Indian Excellence

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