

National Consultation on University and College Counselling Services in India -Emerging Needs & Challenges of Good Practices-

7th June 2016, India International Centre, New Delhi

India has the largest population of youth in the world, there are 356 million youth constitute 28 per cent of the country's population. **China** is second with 269 million young people, followed by **Indonesia** (67 million), the **U.S.** (65 million) and **Pakistan** (59 million), **Nigeria** with 57 million, **Brazil** with 51 million, and **Bangladesh** with 48 million. Never before have there been so many young people and never again is it likely to find such potential for economic and social progress.

Good health is not just about our physical fitness but also about our mental wellbeing. However, more often than not, mental health remains a neglected aspect of healthcare in India. All over the world there's a huge stigma attached to mental illness and India is no exception. Inadequate focus and lack of awareness on the importance of mental health plague the healthcare system of our country. Moreover, lack of sensitivity in handling such cases, stigma, labelling and ostracism inflicted by society and lack of a robust policy framework are but atoms in the plethora of issues pertinent to mental illness. Thus, there is an urgent need to explore, delineate and delve into these issues and emerge with concrete ideas to address the same.

The youth in the Indian society encounter multiplicity, plurality, and diversity of messages in all aspects of their life. On one hand they get the message that they must compete with others and, on the other, they are expected to imbibe social and cultural values of cooperation and mutual support. Similarly, on one hand they see an extreme emphasis on homogeneity and uniformity, on the other, they see uniqueness and individuality getting valued. They get the directions to fall in line, but, they also witness courage and rebelliousness getting appreciation and approval. They get messages of women empowerment and gender equality but they also witness de-humanization and objectification of both the genders in social media. They experience similar conflicts in other aspects of their lives, like, relationships and career choices.

These young adults attempt to resolve these conflicts by discussing them in their peer-groups and by occasionally visiting counselling and guidance centres. But, there are some youth members of the society who need special help in one or more aspects of their life, like some need support in learning, while others in maintaining social relationships; some need help in their intellectual efforts, while others need assistance with the physical labour; similarly, some need chronic help, while others are able to move ahead in their lives with occasional support and guidance.

It is experienced by many that the fabric of **social relations**, which had provided with such support structures in the past, has become weaker because of various reasons. These reasons vary from being personal, like nuclear families, to more social, like economic and social factors. Moreover, there are also some members of the society who like to return to the **formal educational structures** for learning and growth. Further, it is the moral responsibility of both the society and the state to provide such support mechanisms to the young generation and future citizens of the country who can in turn contribute to the growth, development, and progress of the society and the nation.

Therefore, Youth Enrichment, Personality Development, Stress Management, Motivational Enhancement, **Family Life Education, Happiness, Wellbeing awareness Campaigns** and Seminars are proposed as integral part of Higher Education in Universities & Colleges for Indian students. Intervention through structured programs on Personality Enrichment shall be the central points for programming, dissemination and counseling services in the campus. Such support services, under the larger umbrella term '**inclusion**', have already been introduced in the schools, however, no such support services are available for the young adults in their formative years. Thus, the suggestion of University and College Counselling Services in India is being proposed to fill this gap. The key areas of intervention of these services would be to provide support for:

- Career guidance
- Relationship counselling
- Life-skill development, like communication and decision making
- Youth enrichment, motivation and personality Development programs
- Awareness building and counselling on issues related to sexual identity, sexual exploration and health issues surrounding sexuality
- Social awareness programs
- Advocacy services to schools and other institutions
- Special educational needs
- Research and innovation to address specific and contextual needs
- Addressing concerns of diversity, multiculturalism, and peer-pressure
- Tackling the issues of physical and sexual abuse, drug-addiction, post-traumatic and grief counselling
- Psychiatric/ Psychological support for the various psycho-social issues
- Develop a discourse of an enabling society for all
- Dealing with personal concerns like low self-esteem, low-confidence, and feelings of inferiority
- Campaigns, workshops, and training for specific concerns, like emergency relief operations
- Extension of such services to the out-of-the-institution and poor members of the society
- Facilitating and guiding support groups and self-help groups

These services can be provided by a team of professionals and sensitize faculty and students at both college and university levels. These centres may also be a space for the education and training of para-professionals, collaborating with support organizations, and researches. In this reference, there are many questions that need to be pondered upon, like, should there be a national body to manage, supervise, and educate professionals at various levels for these support services? Should the existing staff take up additional responsibilities or specially trained permanent staff would be required for it? At the university & college level, what should be the constitution of the groups providing these services? What can be the role of non-governmental agencies and professional bodies in providing the advocacy research and interventions in guidance and counselling services?

Keeping in view these concerns for the youth and the nation at large, 'Expressions India' takes the lead and the launched the **NATIONAL CONSULTATION for University and College Counselling Services in India focussed on youth and their march towards the Emerging Psychosocial & Emotional Needs and building their overall wellbeing** on 7th June, 2016, 08.30am - 01.30pm, India International Centre, New Delhi. As per the directive of the **University Grants Commission (UGC)** it is mandatory to put in place a broad-based '**Student Counseling System**' for the effective redressal of problems and challenges faced by students in university/colleges

National Consultations

on

University & College Counseling Services in India

7th June, 2016, 08.30am - 01.30pm, India International Centre, New Delhi

Program Schedule

REGISTRATION

- Promotion of Community Mental Health in Indian Universities & Colleges - **Presentation by Youth Crusaders - IMHAI (Gargi College, New Delhi)**
- The Challenge of Youth Wellbeing in India - **Presentation by Ms. Aparna Singh (Senior Counselor & Resource Faculty, Expressions India)**

TEA BREAK

SESSION - I : Proposed Areas for Discussion

- Changing Landscape, Emerging Needs
- The Overarching Principles of Creating Happy, Healthy & Harmonious Colleges
- Program & Practices for Advocacy & Climate Building
- Opinions for Recommendation to the HRD & UGC

SESSION - II : Proposed Areas for Discussion

- Specific Profiling of Refreshers and Upgradation of Faculty/Staff in Soft Skills Development
 - Students Centric Life Skills & Wellbeing Leadership Trainings - Peer to Peer (P2P) Programs
 - Faculty & Students Enrichment in Inculcating basic Counseling Skills
- Recommendations for the HRD & UGC
 - Formation of the Working Group for the International Summit (Dec 2016)
 - On Linkages between school & college based counseling & special education services in India

Organized by

Expressions India: The National Life Skills, Values Education & School Wellness Program, New Delhi

National Consultations

on

University & College Counseling Services in India

7th June, 2016, 08.30am - 01.30pm, India International Centre, New Delhi

Scientific Session II ~ PANEL PROFILE

CHAIRPERSONS

- **Prof. (Dr.) Marshal Mukesh Sahni** - Dean Student Welfare, Amity University, Noida, UP
- **Dr. Neera Pant** - Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, Gargi College, New Delhi

PANELISTS

- **Prof. Rajni Dhingra** - Dean Faculty of Science, P.G Dept. of Home Science, University of Jammu, Jammu
- **Ms. Bhuma Krishnana** - Chief Counselor, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi
- **Prof. Naved Iqbal** - Head, Department of Psychology, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi
- **Ms. Ayesha Banerjee** - Editor - HT Education, The Hindustan Times, New Delhi
- **Mr. Kush Kulshreshtha** - Principal - CEO, Vibrant Group of Academies, Surat, Gujarat.
- **Dr. Harminder Gujral** - Head Consortium, Amity Centre for Guidance & Counseling, Amity University, U.P.

Scientific Session III ~ PANEL PROFILE

CHAIRPERSONS

- **Prof (Dr) Namita Ranganathan** - Professor, Department of Education, University of Delhi, New Delhi
- **Prof. (Dr) Neerja Chadha** - Director (School of Continuing Education) & Professor (Child Development), IGNOU, New Delhi

PANELISTS

- **Mrs. Rupa Murghai** - Counselor, Post graduate in psychology, Guidance and Counseling, Indian Institute of Technology, New Delhi
- **Ms. Swati Munjal** - Director Admissions, BML Munjal University, Gurgaon, Haryana
- **Ms. Karuna Chandrashekar** - Coordinator/Counselor, Centre for Individual and Group Experience, Ashoka University, Kundli, Sonapat, Haryana
- **Ms. Pushpinder Kaur** - Director & GM-cum-CE, Employment News Publication (Min. of I&B), New Delhi
- **Ms. Sapna Tamrakar** - Chief Administrator, Vibrant Group of Academies, Surat, Gujarat

Drugs, violence... hostel life is not easy

ACTION PLAN Psychiatrists, academicians want higher education institutes to provide counselling centres for students



HT Education Correspondent

■ meducation@hindustantimes.com

Academicians interacting closely with students in higher education institutes (HEIs) say that the biggest challenge young people, both men and women, face today is drug abuse. Violence, sexual experimentation, bullying... the list is endless.

Speaking at a gathering of psychiatrists, counsellors and academicians and college students at the India International Centre recently, Dr Kavita Sharma, now president, South Asian University, New Delhi, said alcoholism, sex experiments and bullying were rampant in many campus hostels.

Recalling her tenure as principal of one of Capital Delhi's prominent colleges, she said it was horrifying to discover that "Our hostels are a hotbed of violence. What seniors do to juniors can be described as the worst kind of bullying." People come from small cities are made fun of because of their accent or their inability to speak English. There is huge peer pressure they have to comply with. Many students used to the strict, conservative ways of schools or families felt unfettered and "free to experiment with all sorts of things" once they were in college. Getting parents to resolve issues did not often work as "no matter how many threats you issue, sometimes parents just refuse to get involved."

Sharma's opening remarks were made at the National Consultations on University and College Counselling Services in India. It was organised to recommend a way forward to the HRD ministry following the University Grants Commission



■ **Dr Kavita Sharma (right), watched by other participants lights the lamp at the National Consultations on University and College Counselling Services in India, held recently in New Delhi.**

directive to all HEIs to put in place a Student's Counselling System "for the effective management of problems and challenges faced by students."

Sharma also suggested that parents be involved in counselling sessions too as "at times more than the students, the parents are the ones who need counselling."

Often, they wanted their children to live the life they wanted to and forced their kids to be 'model' children, which puts an unbearable burden on young people. The stigma attached to the word counselling also had to be removed as people objected to being "labelled," she said.

For the all-round development of students, a complete programme had to be chalked out, through exercise, yoga and counselling, which focussed not just on physical development, but also of the mind and 'self', Sharma advised.

Dr Jitendra Nagpal, consultant psychiatrist with a special interest in adolescence and early childhood disorders, who coordinated the event on behalf of Expressions India, the National Life Skills, Values, Community and School Wellness Programme,

urged HEIs to come forward to "urgently" provide counselling services to their students and for the HRD ministry to seriously consider suggestions by HEIs, academicians and counsellors.

It was crucial for counsellors to identify cases of depression. Referring to reports of increased cases of depression in the age group of 10 to 24, Dr Saroj Yadav, dean, academic, NIE, NCERT, New Delhi, stressed on the need for advocacy "with people who matter". Teachers and parents needed to be sensitised to student problems. Opening channels of communication with students was important too, she said.

The age of eighteen was crucial in the life of a student. Unfortunately, unlike in the West in India eighteen was not a magical age and was seen to be in continuity to childhood. The society we lived in was "collectivist," where the "I" had to always be in relation to others. Students in HEIs are of an age when they are discovering themselves, their identities. They have to be supported in this search, said Namita Ranganathan, professor, department of education, Delhi University.

