

Dear *Principals*

I wish to convey my hearty greetings to all of you on the eve of the new academic year 2006-07.

Taking this as an opportunity I wish to share some of my thoughts and feelings with you as we are working together for providing quality education in our colleges.

Teaching is considered as one of the noblest professions and I consider colleges as modern temples where the future of the country is shaped. It is here that the students, at their age of critical learning, spend their most eventful years in their life. More so it is from here they enter the world of work and independent life. The Govt. and Aided Colleges, in particular, serve the students from marginalized sections who are otherwise deprived of their collegiate education. Hence, it is far more important that the students are given a quality education here.

Quality is defined as the 'fitness to purpose'. The purpose, in our context, obviously, is to give an education that builds capabilities and self confidence in the students. Capabilities that are required to succeed in facing the challenges in work and in life.

As you are aware the capabilities are to be built, mainly, in the three areas namely knowledge, skills and values. We need to first set institutional objectives that cater to the needs of students, both quantitatively and qualitatively, in the above three areas. Here I wish to point out that the existing objectives and approach are grossly inadequate in meeting the requirements in the changed scenario of Globalization, Liberalization and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Revolution which have transformed the social canvas and opened doors for global-level opportunities. However, quality is the first requirement to fit into the new scenario. Added to that, new capabilities like working individually and in a team, identifying problems, working from a faraway place, understanding an alien culture etc. have become requirements. The institutional objectives are, therefore, to be redefined and the approaches modified.

I wish to emphasize that the physical facilities, the curriculum and all other activities shall be reoriented, in accordance with the new objectives, to suit to needs with student centered approach. It is our common experience that nothing worthwhile can be done without a sound planning. So, the curricular plans at the institutional, departmental and individual levels are to be built incorporating all the activities that will be taken up for fulfilling the set objectives. The weak

background and low entry-level capabilities of the students shall be considered in preparing a good plan. I have observed that in many colleges the total number of actual instructional days is not reaching even the minimum of 180 days. This must be corrected.

It is needless to say that teaching-learning concern is the core of an educational institution's functioning. The learning outcomes are the real measure of the success of an institution. The teachers get job satisfaction only when the teaching-learning is lively and learner oriented. You all know that use of alternate teaching methods, teaching aids and models etc. beat the monotony and yield maximum learning outcome in the classroom situation. Co-curricular activities such as fieldwork, seminars, expert lectures etc. would enrich learning.

Similarly, independent learning is the hallmark of collegiate education. It is to be promoted by giving challenging assignments that test the learning skills of the students. They should prompt the students to look for evidence outside for the concepts taught in the classroom. The students shall be encouraged to make use of magazines, journals, reference books, newspapers and especially Internet in preparing assignments.

I give rather high importance to research in degree colleges. The general feeling is that research is not a part of undergraduate education. I disagree with this opinion because it is at this age the positive traits like curiosity, exploration, analytical ability etc. flower in human beings. They have to be channelised in the right direction. Doing elementary-level research in the form of project work gives the students valuable finer skills and invaluable scientific temper. I, therefore, request all the teachers, including those of social sciences, to encourage each of their students to participate in the project work. Topics of contemporary relevance shall be preferred. This would happen when the lecturers take up research like true role models. The teachers need to pursue Minor/Major Projects funded by the UGC and others. They should read research journals and subject magazines to be alert and to keep pace with the advancing frontiers of knowledge. Now-a- days the students have vast access to the knowledge domains through Internet. I hope all the lecturers are using Internet and e-mails. Internet and e-mails are the best ways for sharing of experiences and knowledge.

One of the most important objectives of a college is to shape the minds of the students in the right direction. It can be achieved in two ways. First, by the teachers behaving as role models inside and outside the classroom. Secondly, by conducting such extracurricular

activities that foster values such as compassion, harmony, patriotism etc. I need not emphasize that men with knowledge and skills but without character are more a liability than an asset to the Nation.

I hope you would agree with me if I say that each educated adult shall make his own contribution in the enlistment the poor. Absence of this, perhaps, is one of the reasons for our slow progress. One of the means to inculcate the value of compassion in the young minds is community service through extension work. Its real value lies in nurturing compassion in the minds of students rather than the quantum of work turned out. Subject related extension work on the contemporary issues would enlighten the public around and constructive work done would improve the physical conditions in the area concerned.

What I wanted to emphasize most is the fact that learning dimensions have changed in the recent years, expanding the scope and utility of infrastructure Independent learning outside the classroom is one of the most desirable modes. Consequently, supporting independent learning has become an important responsibility of the college. Providing adequate and modern library is the chief of them all. Automation of library with networking facility and Internet has become a minimum requirement. Automation of College administration plays a crucial role in the development of a college. Student services like Admissions, Scholarships need to be computerized and analyzed for trends. The names, addresses and biodata of students are to be maintained both in hard and soft copies for every academic year. This would enable the college to become a repository of data of its students.

It is distressing to note the decline in the number of students and staff participating in sports, games and cultural activities in colleges these days. Playing games not only ensures physical wellbeing of the students but also promotes finer elements like teamwork and harmony. Here also the teachers shall take initiative and lead the students into the field first.

You all know that one of the objectives of the students of higher education is self-sustenance. After the graduation, the students either continue their studies or seek employment. The most valuable support a college can give to its students is career guidance and placement. There may be opportunities right in the town or in the region where the college exists. The college needs to be in constant touch with all possible employers, be it an industry, a firm, a small business house or even a professional, and exchange information. This also helps quality improvement apart from providing placement to the students. It is very unfortunate that many of

our colleges don't have the tradition of having a continuous relationship with their alumni. Alumni will have a sentimental and passionate attachment with their college throughout their lives. It is the responsibility of the college to support its alumni both emotionally and educationally during their progress. In turn, the alumni would be a great support to the college in terms of mobilization of financial assistance, institution of awards and endowment programmes, creating new facilities etc.

I wish to emphasize that a conducive academic environment in the campus is a must for effective learning. While grand buildings and green environs may be necessary for a good academic climate and of course, it does not mean just them. A learning climate aided by an affectionate teacher-student relationship, team spirit, harmony etc. needs to be established. Quick and fair redressal of grievances would promote harmony. Encouraging conduct of extra-curricular activities through associations, clubs, fora etc. would make them systematic and regular.

Each college is unique in having its own students, staff, campus and location. One has to have a close look at all these components to understand the uniqueness and at the same time intra institutional variations. The college might be following a few innovative practices that foster effective learning, support the students, promote harmony or improve academic climate. It is very essential to highlight these practices and encourage more such activities for achieving excellence.

I am happy to share with you some of our efforts for improving the quality in colleges. The intention is that you would participate in them with all enthusiasm for their success. The foremost among them is accreditation of colleges by NAAC. As you are aware, 74 Government and 35 Aided Colleges (109 in all) got accredited so far.. Many of them got high grades raising the status of Andhra Pradesh to a top level at the Country level. I congratulate the Principals, Staff and Students and Managements of all these colleges. More Aided Colleges need to get accredited. I am happy that the Department of Collegiate Education has taken initiatives and participated in this quality movement by supporting the colleges by providing funds, required support, guidance etc. The support will continue. What is more important is enhancing it further.

Another significant effort is establishing 'Jawahar Knowledge Centers' (JKC) in Govt. Degree Colleges. Fifteen more 'Centers' are being added this year taking the total to 26. Each district will have atleast one Center from this academic year. Each JKCs has the potential to provide 100% job guarantee to the students trained by it.

I consider the 'English Language Retraining Programme', where Lecturers in English from Govt. and Aided Colleges are being trained in association with the US Government, as one of the highlights. The feedback is very encouraging. Its success, however, depends on how it percolates down to the students level. Apart from this, we have been conducting regular training programmes to the Principals, Lecturers and non-teaching staff of colleges which were proved to be very effective and to the participants.

One of the most notable activities we have taken up in recent times is 'Repositioning of Higher Education' wherein a serious attempt is being made to enrich the existing undergraduate curriculum in each subject. It is at the final stage in Economics and all the major subjects will be covered in this year. The significance of this programme is, Lecturers from all the Govt. and Aided Colleges are being involved at various stages. I request you all not only to participate in this programme but also to put it into use for enhancing the quality of transactions in the colleges.

Whatever are the contributions from outside, the college is the place where the students get their education that turns and shapes their lives. I hope that the Principal and the staff in particular, shall realize this and be conscious of their sacred responsibilities. With deeply felt concern for the students I earnestly appeal to all of you to take up their cause with passion, dedication and team spirit in imparting quality education to those who are looking up at you with a great hope. Let us live up to their expectations.

With all good wishes

Yours Sincerely
Sd/-Dr.K. Lakshminarayana
Director of Collegiate Education

To
Principals
Govt. & Aided Degree Colleges
A.P