PRESS RELEASE

Philosophy of Education International Conference 2015 by Azim Premji University comes to a close

Bangalore, 21 January 2015: The Philosophy of Education International Conference 2015 was organized by Azim Premji University, Bengaluru, in Hotel Atria from the 19th to 21st January.

Azim Premji University is committed to fostering serious dialogue on issues in education and creating a platform for these discussions. The objective of this conference is to bring together educationists and philosophers of education from across the world to discuss various issues that demand philosophical analysis. The Conference is a means to reach out to people with an interest in this area and to create the much required space to encourage and nurture young scholars in philosophy of education.

This year’s Conference addressed three themes – Notions of Public and Private in education, Ethics and Education and Human Nature and Education. As part of each theme keynote address and invited speakers from India and abroad addressed critical contemporary issues.

Speakers debated on privatization of schools which is considered a panacea to solve the problem of quality education. Professor James Tooley who is a known champion of private schooling particularly with reference to India joined on a video conference to present his arguments for privatization of education like any other market commodity. Prof. Rohit Dhankar, Director, School of Education at Azim Premji University and Prof. Harry Brighouse from University of Wisconsin-Madison pointed out some critical flaws in these arguments. Education of our children is not the same as other market commodities, because it involves learning and the formation of a child into a human being, and cannot be changed like a mobile phone. Many problems with private schools like low teacher salaries or limited learning of children were being ignored in Tooley’s arguments. Brighouse warned that we need to think very carefully before handing over education to market forces, because taking it back would be difficult, if not impossible.

Other well-known speakers included Anthony O’Hear, from University of Buckingham, Nirmalangshu Mukherji, from Delhi University speaking on human nature and education; Randall Curren from University of Rochester, USA, and Susie Tharu EFLU, Hyderabad on Ethics and Education; and Harry Brighouse, University of Wisconsin- Madison, and Gurpreet Mahajan from JNU, New Delhi on Public-Private debate in education. Apart from these invited speakers as well as young scholars presented papers on various issues in these themes.
The papers addressed questions like whether the purpose of education is pursuit of wisdom or about developing a productive workforce? Is good education becoming critical for the survival of the species? What can be assumed about human nature and what kind of human being should education aim for?

These days education is considered a tool to create a productive workforce. Are we doing injustice to the wide range of learning that human beings are capable of? If all human beings are capable of learning, this limited objective of education raises many ethical problems. Such a limited aim of education does violence to the idea of a democratic society.

Further details of the conference are available http://www.azimpremjiuniversity.edu.in/poe/

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