Insights

Reaching Out
Like most things in life, this newsletter too had a small and simple beginning. The University’s first batch of 85 students had just enrolled in July 2011. A few weeks into the first semester, Dr. Patrick Oskarsson, a young professor who spent some time with us before going back to his native Sweden, suggested that he would like to start a university e-newsletter, primarily as a means of sharing news and events about the university amongst students and faculty of the University. That is how this newsletter began.

Now, four years on, come July 2015 we will have over 700 students. In addition to three Masters Programmes (in Education, Development and Public Policy & Governance) the new Undergraduate Programme will also commence. And we felt we have reached an appropriate point of time to introduce a new-look newsletter that should reach out to a wider group and serve as a useful and relevant means of communication with people with whom we should be sharing and conversing regularly. They would of course include our students and faculty and other members of the Foundation, as before, but also the parents of our students, colleges and schools which send us students to join our postgraduate and undergraduate programmes, functionaries in the education and social development departments of state and central governments, as well as relevant segments of the media.

We reckon such a newsletter would be more than just news and events update; so starting with this issue in your hands (or on your screen) the newsletter will also feature thoughts and expressions of our students, our alumni and our faculty. It is also an opportunity to present interesting perspectives on issues related to the subjects of study and research at the University. But all this accompanied by a slice of the lighter side of a vibrant campus - photography, quiz, cartoons etc. from our students and faculty. This newsletter will be a quarterly.

Your feedback and suggestions to improve the newsletter will be invaluable.

S.Giridhar
COO and Registrar
Philosophy of Education International Conference

The Azim Premji University organizes an annual International conference on Philosophy of Education. The 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 needed space to encourage and nurture young scholars in philosophy of education.

Over the last three years, this annual International conference has become increasingly popular. We receive more than 100 papers every year, and more than three hundred people attend the conference. This year the Philosophy of Education International Conference was organized from the 19th to 21st January 2015.

The Conference addressed three themes – Notions of Human Nature and Education. Apart from these invited speakers, young scholars also 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 raises many ethical problems. Which 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 aims 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 aims to create a productive workforce.

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 Tharu Mahajan from JNU, New Delhi on Public-Private debate in education.

Further details of the conference are available at: http://www.azimpremjiuniversity.edu.in/poe/
Admissions
Azim Premji University seeks to enroll students from diverse backgrounds aligned to the core values of the University. To meet this objective, the admissions process is designed to select interested candidates who show evidence of a deep desire to contribute towards education and development in India, demonstrate independence of thought and have a value orientation that is geared towards creating a just, equitable, humane and sustainable society.

The University currently offers Postgraduate Programmes in Education, Development and Public Policy and Governance. This year the National Entrance Test 2015-17 for Masters Programmes was held at 30 centers across India on February 15, 2015. About 1500 students took the test. The interviews were conducted between March 9 - 20, 2015 and now the final admission offers process is currently underway.

The University is also launching the Undergraduate Programme this year. We are offering a three-year, full-time, residential Bachelors Programme in Sciences, Social Sciences and Humanities. The B.A and B.Sc. degrees provide a unique opportunity to explore diverse academic fields and students can take up additional research work to get an Honours degree as well. The early admissions for the Undergraduate Programme were announced and 79% students have accepted the offer. The regular admissions window for the Undergraduate Programme is open till May 25, 2015.

http://azimpremjiuniversity.edu.in/SitePages/admissions-programme-apply.aspx

Student Activities
The University provides Student Support services helping to create an environment where students are supported in realizing their full potential. Some of the major activities organized are given below:

- Blood donation camp was conducted in coordination with an NGO, ‘Sanklap’. Many students, faculty and staff donated blood and 142 units of blood was collected.
- An “Emergency Response Training” was conducted to train people on the knowledge / skill required in emergencies. About 30 volunteers from among the students and faculty attended this.
- Sessions on awareness on Swine Flu were conducted by the campus doctor.
- A series of weekly interactions on the subject of self-empowerment, life skills and developing a growth mindset has been initiated with the first year PG students.
- The Sports Club organized Cricket, Badminton, Table Tennis and Chess tournaments in which students and staff participated.
- The Pahal Club organized ‘Get Wasted - the Waste Segregation Game’. This was to create awareness among all the members about segregation of waste.

Placements
Placement season kicked off in February with a dedicated placement week. As on date 90+ organizations have shown interest and 168 jobs have been offered. As part of the placement process several workshops and seminars have been organized to help students make informed choices. The placement process will continue until May 2015.

University Resource Centre
The University Resource Center (URC) is the Continuing Education wing of the University. It aims to develop and transform existing talent through its continuing education programmes for professionals and institutions in the fields of education and development. Major highlights of the Centre include:

Professional Development Programmes
- Professional Effectiveness Programme (PEP) group facilitated the following programmes this month:
  - A two-day workshop on Workshop Designs by an external facilitator with participants internal and external to the Foundation.
- Professional Development Programmes (PDP): Education group contributed to the following programmes and workshops:
  - A two-day workshop on Personal Effectiveness for senior academic faculty from DIETs, CTEs and SCERT, Bihar was held in Bengaluru. Around 50 participants attended this programme.
  - A workshop for developing two-year B.Ed curriculum at SCERT Chattisgarh.
  - Seminars organized by DIET, CTEs and PTECs of Bihar.

Assessment and Accreditation
- Drafted a set of recommendations for the National Policy of Education 2015 on the following themes:
  - Ensuring Learning Outcomes in Elementary Education
  - Reforming School Examination Systems
  - School Standards, School Assessment and School Management Systems
  - These were also shared with the School Education Committee in FICCI.
- Pilots of the Teacher Assessment Study were conducted with teachers in Dhamtari district, Chhattisgarh. This included classroom observations followed by conversational interviews with teachers in selected government schools.
- Sessions on building perspective on assessments in language was facilitated in Tonk along with the field team. This was part of a demonstration course on Bhasha and Arts for government school teachers.

Field Practice
Field engagements are integral to the curriculum of all programmes of the University. The opportunity for students to closely interact with the Field Institutions of the Azim Premji Foundation helps students to develop a deeper understanding of the practical implications of educational understanding gained through the academic programmes.

Shikshana Mela 2015 – ‘Explore, Experience, Enjoy’: M.A. Education and Development Students volunteered in the Shikshana Mela organized by the Karnataka State Institute. 500 children from 15+ school participated in this mela which helped students and teachers to explore the significance of maths and science concepts by observing their surrounding environment.

Education and Development: M.A. Education and Development Students visited Yadgir/Gulbarga to do a case study on school students who had dropped out due to family and social issues.

M.A. Education Introduction to Research (ITR) visit: Students of M.A. Education visited the Foundation’s Field Institutes around the country and other partner organizations that comprises of NGOs and other Institutes working in the field of education. These visits had the objective of providing the students first-hand experience to the process of research.

M.A. Development Field Internship: Orientation meeting for Field Internship Project was conducted for M.A. Development second semester students.
**Student Reflections**

**What is special about ‘special’**

Suchaita Tenneti

With all the multifarious experiences I have had over the past two years, and all in breathless succession, it has been hard for me to reflect on how I have grown. But an archetype of my journey could be the evolution of an idea I had when I started the programme. My decision to pursue a Master’s in Education was driven by my interest in inclusive education, implying the education of children with special needs in mainstream settings. My primary objective was to develop an understanding of “pedagogical methods” to prepare children with disabilities to study in regular schools.

But in my very first semester, I was persuaded to question my hitherto held assumptions about disability. I had never questioned who defines disability or how disability is characterized. Besides, while I have always been interested in feminism, it had never occurred to me to use disability as an analytical category to understand power relations in a way in which gender is employed. I also assumed that a degree in special education was crucial to achieving academic inclusion. Without conscious motivations, I held a conception of disability as a kind of “lack”, which could be compensated by giving children with special needs the opportunity to study alongside their non-disabled peers.

Limited scholarship on inclusive education from the perspective of human rights and within the framework of constructivist pedagogy, few models of successful inclusion, and general pessimism about the feasibility of inclusion had curtailed my own vision. But as I developed the ability to analyse an issue through multiple frameworks and disciplinary lenses and not lose sight of an aspiration, no matter how utopian, based exclusively on empirical realities, I developed a more informed and critical understanding of inclusive education. My fieldwork exposed me to a wide range of inclusive and special education settings where I had the opportunity to understand various interpretations/missinterpretations of disability that often result in the creation of exclusionary settings, inimical to children with special needs. While developing an English curriculum for a special school as a part of a field project, I began to question the “special” in special education and whether disabilities could be situated in the broader context of learner diversity and the uniqueness of every learner’s needs.

Despite the fact that I am yet to encounter a truly inclusive education setting, my learnings at the University have made me more optimistic about the possibilities of inclusive education. Today I feel more confident and equipped to work with children with special needs and am less intimated by my lack of formal training in special education. I believe that I have progressed far beyond my initial intention of grasping “methods” of inclusion and have learnt to analyse inclusive education not in isolation but within the broader discourses of education.

**Alumni Account**

**Method in the MADness**

Pradeep Agrahari

I am an alumnus of Azim Premji University and it took me two years (2012-14) to be recognized as MAD – Master of Arts in Development. Sometimes I think the acronym quite suits my current profession as a Gandhi fellow. I think in the present world where accumulation, selfishness and competition dominates society, one needs a bit of madness to swim against the stream and attempt to make this world a little fairer.

My fellowship journey has started from 1st of July, 2014 when I was assigned to work in 5 Government Schools and their local communities, dealing with 5 headmasters, 25 teachers and 350 children in Jhunjhunu district of Rajasthan. I think of my five schools and the attached communities as laboratories for me to conduct experiments to realize my vision. I am trying to implement my learnings from the university on the ground. Without any kind of authority, the impact I am trying create is not easy. But I am adding values on the ground thanks to my learning in the MAD course. MAD has developed my capacity for thoughtful and appropriate interventions as I am well informed about development policies. This lens to view institutions, communities and individuals gives me a larger perspective to understanding social problems.

The fellowship program gives me verities to critically analyze our education system and its relation with holistic development of an individual and the society. My interaction with the diverse stakeholders (students, parents, teachers, head masters, government, non-government officials and community members) makes me more aware of the beliefs, mind sets and behaviour of rural north Indian populace. I feel I would have been clueless like some others I meet here had it not been for my learnings through MAD. After the academic course now the field experience in my fellowship enables me to find out the connections and gaps between theories of philosophers like Aristotle, Foucault, Marx, Gandhi, Wendy, Nandy, Illich and Guha and the realities on the ground. My first-hand experience offers me the opportunity to practice interventions critically and rationally and explore means of ensuring holistic development in our current society.

In the search for alternative systems I found decentralization or self-governance system, suggested by people like Mahatma Gandhi as Swaraj could be the right choice. But this kind of system needs leaders of high competence and ethical standards. In my two years of fellowship I am trying to work on both these components so that I can be more effective in working towards the vision of realizing a just, equitable, humane and sustainable society.

I am at my initial stage of my experiments with today’s version of ‘Swaraj’ and have met with some success. My 5 schools are heading towards a holistic learning environment and one of them has been awarded Design for Change’s “I Can” award, 2014 for its change story. But I know I have a long way to go.
The Violence of the Victims
Bhupender Yadav

Shiny and I were generally happy as India had convincingly won a cricket match yesterday. Just then our gate opened. I went out to see who had come in. Hiding by the side of the gate was a boy. He looked at me and gestured that I keep quiet. I thought he was playing some hide and seek. The boy had clothes but no footwear. Light in build but dark in complexion, the boy looked a little scared and disheveled. Just as I wanted to speak to the boy, I noticed three other children coming into our compound. They looked better fed and clothed than the boy who came in first. Two of them were boys.

The eldest of these three intruders, who came in the second batch, was a girl. She asked me whether I had seen someone there. I did not want to betray my first guest, the terrified boy. So, I kept quiet. The aggressive girl just barged deeper into our compound. She saw the terrified boy sitting by the side of the wall. He was playing some hide and seek. After the intruders left, I brought the terrified boy in. I was happy that he knew some Hindi. He told me this group stole phones in the mall near our house. They were beating him and accusing him of pilfering some phone which had been picked by them. As if to prove his innocence, the terrified boy said, ‘Please check. I’ve no phone, Bhaiya.’ I was not interested in sitting on judgement. So, I asked him what we should do now. The boy could suggest nothing. Then, I offered to drop him home. He happily agreed to this proposal.

After we left, Shiny saw that the three belligerents returned in front of our house. So, the boy was rightly fearing a reign of bashing. After leaving the terrified boy to safety, I thought I have only temporarily rescued him from imminent danger. Who’s going to reform and rehabilitate the kids falling into a life of crime? Were they a part of a gang? Will it mean another day of bashing.

The boy could suggest nothing. Then, I offered to drop him home. He happily agreed to this proposal.

I could make sense of is ‘phone’ and police. Their victim was in tears and he was now contradicting the trio but a lot less aggressively. Was he wronged or was he the wrong-doer? More than such justice-related questions, I wanted peace at home. So, like a seemingly good elder, I decided to save the terrified boy as he was the first to seek shelter as a fugitive, had tears in his eyes and looked poorer also.

After the belligerents left, I brought the terrified boy in. I was happy that he knew some Hindi. He told me this group stole phones in the mall near our house. They were beating him and accusing him of pilfering some phone which had been picked by them. As if to prove his innocence, the terrified boy said, ‘Please check. I’ve no phone, Bhaiya.’ I was not interested in sitting on judgement. So, I asked him what we should do now. The boy could suggest nothing. Then, I offered to drop him home. He happily agreed to this proposal.

The boy told me his family was from Raichur (north Karnataka). They lived in a slum off the busy Bannerghatta Road in Bengaluru. There was his mother, two sisters and three brothers at home. But no father?

After we left, Shiny saw that the three belligerents returned in front of our house. So, the boy was rightly fearing a reign of bashing. After leaving the terrified boy to safety, I thought I have only temporarily rescued him from imminent danger. Who’s going to reform and rehabilitate the kids falling into a life of crime? Were they a part of a gang? Will it mean another day of stealing, scooting and beatings for these kids tomorrow?

Research Round Up

Securing Property Titles through Biometric Technology
Nafis Hasan

This is an abridged version of the abstract of the paper titled "Securing Property Titles through Biometric Technology" presented by Nafis Hasan at the "Annual World Bank Conference on Land and Poverty 2015: Linking Land Tenure and Use for Shared Prosperity", March 23-27, 2015 at Washington DC, USA.

This paper presents the findings of a study that analyzes the provisioning of property titles to slum dwellers in Bengaluru through the use of biometric technologies as proposed in the Karnataka Draft Housing and Habitat Policy 2009. This study is guided by two key questions pertaining to the implementation of policies – first, what significance do documents of varying legality linked to property rights have for tenure security and investments in slums of Bangalore? Second, can the use of biometrics to titling documents and other services lead to an increase in perceived tenure security among slum dwellers?

To investigate the first question the results from a pilot survey was used. The survey was conducted by the author in four slums of Bangalore with a group of slum dwellers receiving some sort of titling documents and corresponding control group of slum dwellers with no such documents other things remaining constant. The results of the survey point to the conclusion that documents have an impact on threat of eviction, formal and informal loans, improvement in housing and investment in consumer durables, in short aspects related to perceived tenure security.

Further, semi-structured interviews with slum dwellers who have received biometric cards reveals that slum dwellers are confused about the nature of rights and tenure security associated with the biometric card. In the implementation of the new housing policies in Bangalore, biometric technology does not always prevent ineligible beneficiaries from being included into the list. This is of concern as it has implications for the costs of the project and its long term sustainability in ensuring security of tenure. While biometric based identification systems have been shown to be superior to manual systems for delivery of public services and financial inclusion, focus on the socio-political environment in which the technology operates can help improve its value further.

The paper concludes by recommending that one way of reducing leakage because of person and path dependent procedures in the application of biometric technology, is through the introduction of Registrars and Enrollment agents within the level of the citizen and the biometric database. This is seen in biometric and demographic enrolment of citizens’ into the Unique Identification Number (UID) database, in which third party private or government agents act as registering bodies to carry out the enrolment on a pay per user model. Such an incentive model can reduce the incidence of corruption while creating a database of genuine beneficiaries for housing units linked to property titles in the slums of Bangalore. Such a strategy has the additional advantage of reducing the work load on an already beleaguered personnel of the urban local bodies and ensuring sustainability and scalability of implementing housing policies that lead to a strengthening of perceived tenure security.

Nafis Hasan is a faculty of the University and his interests are in Social Theory, History and Anthropology of Bureaucracy and State.
Published Articles

On Education
- Indocentric in Quise of Education: Robit Dharakar, The Hindu, March 30, 2015
- Education is Fourth Pillar of Development: Dileep Ranjeetkar, Times of India, January 26, 2015
- Reform Teacher Education: Anurag Behar, Live Mint, January 21, 2015

On Development
- Unplanned Urbanization: Anurag Behar, Live Mint, March 4, 2015

On Public Policy and Governance

On Science
- Factors influencing the Local Scale Colonisation and Change in Density of a Widespread Invasive Plant Species, Lantana Camara, in South India: Birath Sundaram, Ackila J Hirenmath, Jagdish Krishnaswamy: NeoBiot 25: 27-46, April 14, 2015

On Arts, Culture and Society
- India is a State-Nation, not a Nation-State: Chandan Gowda, Bangalore Mirror, March 13, 2015
- 1992: Tagore’s Township Experiment: Chandan Gowda, Bangalore Mirror, March 9, 2015
- Unplanned Urbanization: Anurag Behar, Live Mint, January 21, 2015
- Education is Fourth Pillar of Development: Dileep Ranjeetkar, Times of India, January 26, 2015
- Reform Teacher Education: Anurag Behar, Live Mint, January 21, 2015

Conference Participations
- Himanshu Upadhyay participated in India WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) Summit 16th to 18th February in New Delhi. For more details about summit: http://www.indiawashsummit.org/
- Purag I Shome participated in the 2nd national workshop on Livelihood Education: “Creating new practice” at XIMB on Feb 5-6th. He presented the LH Specialization structure and design of the University. A handbook of LH curriculum resources named “Livelihoods Education in India” was released in the workshop.

Research
- Some of our ongoing research projects:
  - Land Governance Study
  - Legal System Reforms Study
  - Policy Lessons of and for Revitalization of Local Health Traditions in India
  - An Evaluation of the Non-formal Pre-School Education in Medak District
  - LiRIL: Literacy Research in Indian Languages
  - Multi-Species, Multi-Trophic Interactions in Ast Memic Complexes

Publications & Resources
- Teachers of India portal
- At Right Angles Learning Curve
- Language and Language Teaching
- Teachers of India portal can be accessed at: http://www.teachersofindia.org/en and the publications can be accessed at: http://azimpremjiuniversity.edu.in/SitePages/resources-newspaper-magazine-articles.aspx

Quiz Time 1501

1. Who is the only Indian Prime Minister whose signature has appeared on our currency notes?
2. Introduced on 15th Aug 1972, each character of it denotes a region, sub-region, sorting district and individual offices of an Indian institution whose speed and efficiency it aimed to improve. What are we talking about?
3. What do you arrive at by dividing a person’s mental age by his or her chronological age and expressing it as a percentage?
4. Rajasthan
5. Chabutra

Answers to Quiz Time 1501
1. S. R. Raje
2. PIN Code
3. IQ
4. Rajasthan
5. Chabutra

Colloquiums
- Relevance of Bhagat Singh’s Ideas in Our Times: Prof Chaman Lal, Former Chairperson of Centre of Indian Languages in Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. March 23, 2015.
- What is Wrong with the Media and what Can Be Done About it: Hartosh Singh Bal, Political Editor, The Caravan Magazine. February 6, 2015.

To read about these and more colloquiums, please visit: http://azimpremjiuniversity.edu.in/SitePages/event-colloquium-list.aspx.
Bidding goodbye to the Class of 2015
Our students of M.A. Education and M.A. Development who are graduating in June this year will be leaving the University and moving into the next phase of their life. We wish them all the best.

Getting ready to welcome new faces
The admission process would have been over by June and the new batch of students would be joining us in July. Among them would be the students of Undergraduate Programme and M.A. in Public Policy and Governance, both being introduced this year.

Exciting Summer Schools
We have two exciting summer schools lined up: Summer School on Education, Theme: Changing nature of the Public and the Private in School Education, June 10-15, 2015 and Summer School in Philosophy of Education, Theme: Rationality and its Discontent, June 8-19, 2015. To know more please visit: azimpremjiuniversity.edu.in > Events > Conferences

About Azim Premji University
Azim Premji University was established in Karnataka by the Azim Premji University Act 2010 as a not-for-profit University and is recognized by The University Grants Commission (UGC) under Section 22F. The University has a clearly stated social purpose. As an institution, it exists to make significant contributions through education towards the building of a just, equitable, humane and sustainable society. This is an explicit commitment to the idea that education contributes to social change.

The beginnings of the University are in the learning and experience of a decade of work in school education by the Azim Premji Foundation. The University is a part of the Foundation and integral to its vision. The University currently offers Postgraduate Programmes in Education, Development and Public Policy and Governance, Undergraduate Programmes in Sciences, Social Sciences and Humanities, and a range of Continuing Education Programmes.

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