

SECOND IAPCHE REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR ASIA-OCEANIA JANUARY 14TH
TO 17TH 2005 CHENNAI ,INDIA

KEY LESSONS

Education for sustainable development encompasses a new vision of education that seeks to empower people of all ages to assume responsibility for creating a sustainable future.

Life long learning, including adult and community education, appropriate technical and vocational education higher education and teacher education are all vital ingredients of capacity building for a sustainable future.

In this new vision of education, sustainable development is grounded in four interdependent systems:

Report of the Inaugural Session

The session opened with a prayer by Dr.Bridget Mary Aitchison followed by the hymn , “Stand up stand up for Jesus”.

Mrs. Susheila Williams the Chair of the host committee welcomed the gathering and “Kuthuvilakku”, the lamp was lit.

Dr. Van Dyke in his presidential address noted that this Conference at a time of national disaster is appropriate, for as Christian we come together, commemorate the loss of life an partake in the sorrow.

Dr.K.Rajarathinam gave the inaugural address. He commented that Christian Higher Education in India has provided leadership since Independence struggle for many of the leaders had been educated in mission schools. The challenge of presenting the gospel in a multireligious context has become outdated and new challenges have cropped up. The following are some we have to reckon with:

When 1/3 of Asia’s population is absolutely poor, caught up in illiteracy, ill health, social and economic inequality and hunger, how do we talk of higher education?

In this time of technological advancement what is the identity of Christian Higher Education? Can it have social relevance and offer academic excellence?

Globalization is profit – oriented and contradicts the Christian concept of justice and identifying with the poor. Values are being effected. Will Christian Higher Education keep the values intact?

In India some people are subjected to inhuman treatment which is accepted by scriptures and tradition and church has ignored that Has Christian Higher Education done any research on these areas and train people to break the shackles?

The delegates observed silence sharing the sorrow caused by the Tsunami tragedy.

The students of CSI Bishop Appasamy College performed a Bharthanatiam welcome dance and Mrs.Mrinalini R David Presented the vote of thanks.

INDUCTORY REMARKS by Dr.Nick Lantinga: Dr. Lantinga joyously remarked that the Lord Jesus reigns and the number of the Christian Colleges in countries other than US is on the increase.

By"Christian' we mean those who recognize the creator's design in this world and see that sin has ruined it and not all life live to the glory of God. Still there is no despair because God has given an opportunity to do justice and create not an Eden but a highway to New Jerusalem.

He explained the structure and programming of IAPCHE. It is not west centered. It is committed to raising Christian scholars and leaders. Not thinkers alone but doers as well.

He reported that the CASC program planned in the previous conference has taken off with 10 courses.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS-PROF.J.DINAKARLAL

Prof. Dinakaral in his keynote address reported that the Christian missionaries took up education as God's work and an instrument of social change. The institutions were centers radiating the love of God. It produced leadership in the church and in the society and government as well.

In a multi religious context the institutions are called to serve the entire society and win the confidence of people from other faith while keeping their Christian identity.

Religious fundamentalists are the threat. Christian institutions are looked at as vestiges of colonial rule and hence they should learn to adapt to the native culture. They should be centers of excellence.

The new vision would be the enabling of Christian institutions of Asia/Oceania region working together for meaningful development. Student and staff exchange programs could be held. IAPCHE can think of opening a regional office in this area.; Training programmes for faculty on research development and leadership, and personality development programs for students could be conducted. Quality enhancement could be attempted through the lending of faculty and equipment by the well established institutions to the struggling ones. IAPCHE could work with other Christian Associations like AIACHE. Developed countries could open their doors to students from

this region by providing scholarships. Twinning programmes could be established. Study of other faiths can be encouraged. Underprivileged and marginalized should be given preference. Students should be trained to fight social evils and be peace makers. In the discussions that ensued, clarification are sought for the term "inter-religious". It was explained as "Loving and understanding people of another faith and culture". It was commented that Christianity in India has acquired a Western Culture but now with the globalization it is not imposed and Christian institutions could make efforts to identify with the native culture by having Indianised worship services and striving to keep meaningful values intact.

EXPECTATIONS SHARINGS

Dr. Bridget Mary from Australia shared that she would like the conference to help her take her blinders of ethnicity off so that she could serve her students who are from various cultures better.

Dr. John from Philippines wanted to know how in the context of Muslim population they could teach the love of Christ in a concrete form. Dr. Ali Sornam of India would like to have a new curricula planned to reach non-Christians, a new strategy in the teaching-learning process and to plan the possibilities of the tie-up programmes.

Dr. Justus of North India was concerned about promoting Higher Education in illiterate, Hungry North India.

TRACK I KEY NOTE ADDRESS

Christian Higher Education for Dialogue between Christians and Non-Christians. –
Dr. Hisakazu Inagaki

Christianity in Asia has been a private religion. While it is necessary for the state to have a distance from religious institutions, Christianity must influence the civil public sphere. Friendship should be the ethical value that plays a significant part in Christianity becoming a public religion. In a civil society public opinions need to be formed on issues like wars and a public forum is necessary. How do we think about these problems as Christians in Asian Civil Society?

The discussions that followed centered on how to organize the shift from personal to public sphere. The Christian groups should be active in the civil society. They can form political parties as long as they do not cause conflicts. Fanaticism should be discouraged.

TRACK II KEYNOTE ADDRESS

HOW CAN WE PREPARE TEACHERS IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS AND
PRIMARY SCHOOLS TO TEACH IN A MULTI-RELIGIOUS CONTEXT?

DR. VAN DYK

The terms in the title was explained. “We “ would refer to the Christian Higher Educational Institutions. The teachers in the schools would be those who have understood the doctrines of sin and redemption. The schools would refer to all different types of schools.

There are two theme laid out in the presentation:

General task of Christian Higher Education

Specific task of developing competence to teach.

- a. General Task: It is mistakenly believed that curriculum and teaching methods are objective and common to both secular and Christian Institutions. Hence not much attention is given to this area. Four areas could be concentrated upon.
 1. Engage in locally contextualized educational research. In such a religious/ political/ social contexts students are equipped to be agents in restoring the hurting world.
 2. Sustain teacher educational programmes leading to life situations. Teachers are often trained in secular institutions and come with a pagan world view to teach.
 3. Development of effective leadership. The Christian style of leadership – servant leadership – and the skills pertaining to it ought to be developed.
 4. Development of resources. Through academic publications and providing manuals this could be done.
- b. Specific Task: Without sufficient insight teachers will not be able to teach.

There are five areas where teachers could be trained.

- a. Foundation – World view, religious orientation, philosophy, History of Education. Teacher should be able to articulate the Christian World view and be able to challenge the spirits of age.
- b. Purpose – The ultimate aim is to train knowledge able and competent disciples to serve as agents of Christ in a complicated world. They should show love and care in all areas.
- c. Biblical view of the child: How we see a child influences how we teach. Are they seen as animals to be trained or as image-bearers of God?
- d. Curriculum: Content can never be neutral. They are coloured by world views. A Christian explores how sin corrupts and a call is made to make all things new.
- e. Pedagogical Methods: This too is not objective. Teaching is to be seen as sacred activity. The Christian style of class room management and setting the

atmosphere should be explored. Fear of failure or of the teacher does not facilitate a Christian atmosphere.

The address ended with a call to the institutions to examine the schools in their area and maintain a teacher education programme. Seminaries could plan to train teachers.

Questions were asked as to how this is possible in a multi religious context. It was told that teachers need to be confident to articulate how they see their role. Content becomes permeated with the perspectives of the teachers.

There was a comment that the organizational preparation, strategies and teacher preparedness are taken into account. For learning to take place the target population, the students, also should be included.