

SATHYA SAI IDEAL EDUCATION CONFERENCE – SUMMARY REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Sathya Sai Ideal Education Conference was held in Prasanthi Nilayam from 6-8 July 2014. The overarching objective of the Conference was to receive input from members of Institutes of Sathya Sai Education and Sathya Sai Schools on challenges to further strengthening the institutions and programs, and develop roadmaps to bridge gaps and meet the challenges. Two hundred and eighty-four teachers from over 55 countries, representing 28 Institutes of Sathya Sai Education and 40 Sathya Sai Schools came together to participate in this landmark conference organized by the Education Committee of the Sathya Sai World Foundation.

The three days were divided into 10 sessions; eight sessions focused on a specific topic for which input was sought. To enhance the ability of everyone to be heard, participants were divided into working groups composed of senior SSEHV teachers, members of ISSEs and staff of Sathya Sai Schools. Participants in each working group stayed together for the three days. Each working group was provided two facilitators and one scribe, and a series of questions pertinent to each session. At the end of each session, the notes from each working group were typed, and then all the notes from each session were combined.

This report provides a summary of Conference participants' deliberations and suggestions. The Education Committee is reviewing these suggestions and a plan is being implemented that will enhance collaboration and extend the global reach of Sathya Sai Education. A full report of education activities can be found in the Annual Report of Sathya Sai International Organization, 2013-2014.

Session 1: Sathya Sai Ideal Education

1. Sathya Sai Baba's Vision of Education

- Sathya Sai Baba's vision of education is based on awakening the latent Divinity within. Only this leads to realising the full human potential with Divine attributes which manifest as harmony of thought, word and deed. Practice of Human Values underlies transformation. Thus, one of the primary purposes of education should be to equip students with a deep understanding of Human Values through the deliberate construction of educational experiences that include an induction into a "mind and heart culture" that will manifest as human excellence and good character.
- Sathya Sai Baba's vision of education is based on awareness that the end of education is character. This vital objective of education is realized through integration of Human Values into all aspects of education. This gives a 'soft tender heart,' and good social, communication and thinking skills. It also fosters greater introspection, improves behavior, and leads to higher achievements and transformation. Individual transformation of students is the basis of world transformation. Stewardship of the environment, good citizenship, and responsible leadership are the results of such transformation. Thus, Sathya Sai Baba's vision is that education reform based on the practise of universal Human Values will lead to the establishment of a new civilization. Those at the helm of His vision of education

should be exemplars of Human Values. Sathya Sai Institutes, Sathya Sai School teachers, and parents should work in unity to bring this vision into reality.

Philosophy of Educare

- Sathya Sai Baba has clarified that worldly education brings out knowledge pertaining to the physical world while spiritual education brings out the inherent Divinity in humanity. In His teachings Sathya Sai Baba emphasized that philosophy remains bookish knowledge unless it provides the tools for its application. Educare is enriched with the appropriate tools and strategies to manifest inherent Divinity.
- Educare awakens the awareness of who we are and how we may manifest our human potential through the practice of Human Values. When we are aware of the truth of our inherent Divinity we live in constant communion with God and feel His Presence within. Educare enhances the capacity to listen to the voice of conscience, which enables us to engage actively with the five Human Values and transform society. Through Educare we create resonance with all creation: we take care of the environment, put a ceiling on desires, respect the unique character and culture of every country, and promote unity of faiths. Thus, Educare is the royal road to everlasting happiness and bliss. The wellspring of Educare is Love. Through Educare we cultivate purity within and this leads to enlightenment.

Uniqueness of Sathya Sai Education

Secular education often lacks explicit focus on values. Its main objective is learning about the world and enabling the earning of a good livelihood. Sathya Sai Education on the other hand is unique in that it combines worldly and spiritual education.

- Practise of the universal five Human Values promotes the language of the heart. It underpins holistic development and the blossoming of excellence through its focus on developing all the 5 domains of the human personality and the realization of the true human nature. Its focus is on goodness; its emphasis is on the spiritual rather than the religious. The core tenets of Sathya Sai Education are: ceiling on desires - time, money, energy, food; unity of faiths and respect of all religions, unity in diversity, and Unity of Head, Heart, and Hand.
- In Sathya Sai Education, Love is the undercurrent of all aspects of education and it is this that leads to transformation and optimal human development. The objective of Sathya Sai Education is “head and heart culture” which awakens the conscience and builds character. Its philosophical frame is Educare which utilizes the pedagogy of integral education which equips the individual with tools for personal development and manifestation of human excellence. Its foundation is constant integrated awareness, faith in God, and unity and purity.
- Sathya Sai Education is not commercialised education. Most of its activities in the community are conducted by volunteers.

- Teacher training is unique in Sathya Sai Schools and ISSEs. The teachers and trainers are committed to the teachings of Sathya Sai Baba, not to the money they may earn. The teachers strive to become exemplars of human values. They cultivate their own spirituality through their engagement in Educare and follow the dictum “First be, then do, and then tell.” Educare forges heart to heart authentic relationships – teacher to teacher, teacher to students, and students to students, and stresses a strong triple partnership between teachers, parents, and students.. Its methodology and techniques focus on experiential learning and integration of Human Values into all curricular subjects.

2. Relevance to Global Challenges

Sathya Sai Education provides unique and lasting solutions for the current global challenges by providing an antidote at the root level of a pervasive spiritual malaise. These challenges include widespread moral laxity, increasing crime and corruption, disparity in the distribution of wealth, looming shortages of food and water, religious and cultural intolerance, materialism and increased greed and selfishness, loss of biodiversity, pollution of rivers, sea, land, and atmosphere, climate change, confused parenting, relative absence of good role models, widespread anxiety and tension, addictive behaviours, and spiritual void in most lives. These challenges underline a need for a newer ways of thinking and conducting our lives. Whole cultures transform when many individuals make small changes in the way they think and live.

- Sathya Sai Education transforms individuals by eliciting Peace and Love from within. The transformation in thinking and feeling, mind and heart, is passed on from the individual to the family, the environment and society, strengthens the family unit, and increases parental involvement with their children. Sathya Sai Education focuses on the cause and not the effect of mind and heart pollution.
- Putting Love into practice leads to a transformed and more peaceful world. When our decisions are based on the Human Value of Love we are enabled to identify with others leading to a deeper understanding of and unity between peoples . Thus it is an antidote to hatred, intolerance, wars, and religious strife.

With Sathya Sai Education we become more aware of how to live in this world, and become more proactive in dealing with current global challenges. When we are able to turn within and find joy, we have less wants and are less affected by the powerful media focus on consumption and wasteful use of resources. We place a ceiling on our desires with gratitude for what we already have. With this awareness we become better stewards of the environment. Sathya Sai Education is thus an antidote to pollution, wasteful management of resources, and materialism.

- Sathya Sai Education increases our engagement with the community through selfless service. Such transformations at the individual level can lead to a new civilisation based on Human Values. A pervasive presence of Human Values in every country

could attack the root cause of the global challenges rather than merely alleviate symptoms of a deep spiritual malaise.

Session 2: Training Programs

Participants discussed the scope of the roles and functions of ISSEs. These are detailed in the ISSE Guidelines and nothing substantive was added at this Conference. However, many suggestions were given on the role of the ISSEs in developing and delivering training of teachers, and training of trainers and facilitators for community programs and Sathya Sai Schools. Concern was expressed on the lack of clarity of content of the courses. While several ISSEs were satisfied with the present syllabus for the training of teachers, ISSEs needed greater clarity on the standards for delivering the various courses.

- Several ISSEs indicated that assistance with material resources for training of facilitators could improve their performance. In addition, training could be enhanced by establishing quality controls to assure consistency of standards across all ISSEs . It was noted that there is no current arrangement by the EC to assess the standards of training being given by the different ISSEs.
- Another area of concern is the awarding of a “Diploma” at the completion of SSEHV training. The term Diploma has legal implications as it denotes an accredited qualification approved by the Ministry of Education in most countries. The awarding of a Diploma implies that the teacher has attended and satisfied the requirements of an accredited course with its mandatory approval by the Ministry of Education. Currently, the majority of ISSEs are providers of unaccredited training and are neither Recognized Training Organizations nor Higher Education Institutions. Unless the ISSE and its courses are accredited by the local Ministry of Education at the appropriate level the term “Diploma” should be replaced to indicate that the candidate has completed a course of training to become a qualified SSEHV teacher.
- Integrating values into government-mandated curricula in Sathya Sai Schools and Government Schools could be greatly enhanced by making available teaching resources and training trainers to deliver integrated programs at different levels in education. A mechanism of sharing of resources from different ISSEs could be a step forward.
- Funding issues, including costs associated with training, and whether the ISSEs should have a role in funding Sathya Sai Schools was clarified. There was agreement that financial support for ISSE activities and for Sathya Sai Schools is the responsibility of the Sathya Sai Organisation. The funding could be best managed through a dedicated Education Trust.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The use of the term “Diploma” for training should be discontinued unless the course is approved by the local Ministry of Education and evidence is provided to the EC of such approval.
2. The EC has no current role in providing financial support for training of trainers or for the ongoing costs of running Sathya Sai Schools or ISSEs. Finance is the responsibility of the local Sathya Sai Organisation and the funds are optimally managed through a dedicated Education Trust. This arrangement is satisfactory.

Action Points

1. The EC will assist ISSEs that require training of trainers by encouraging exchange of expertise between ISSEs. There is no international faculty of trainers at present and the current arrangement is to host “experts” from the various ISSEs to Conferences for sharing their expertise.
2. The EC is establishing a web site to enable different ISSEs to access good teaching and training material and to share resources. ISSEs desirous of sharing their material resources should send it to the EC for quality assurance before it is posted on the EC web site.

Session 3: Quality Assurance

The participants’ deliberations centred on clarifying guidelines on the appointment of the Director and staff of ISSEs, including who should make these decisions.

- The present arrangement of approval by the SSS World Foundation for the appointment of Director was regarded as satisfactory. The Director should be appropriately qualified and a devotee. The Director of the ISSE should appoint his or her own team of staff members and faculty. The current arrangements on the appointment of the Director of the ISSE are satisfactory as given in the ISSE Guidelines.
- Application to establish a new ISSE should include evidence for its need and the availability of local expertise capacity to fulfill its functions as described in the Guidelines. It is desirable that the ISSE conducts regular audits of its performance. The current requirements for the establishment of new ISSEs given in the Guidelines are satisfactory.
- Participants deliberated on the procedure for appointing the Board of Governors, the Principal, and the teaching staff of Sathya Sai Schools. The ISSE has an oversight role to monitor all operations in the Sathya Sai School and this is satisfactory as given in the Guidelines.

- The current Guidelines on establishing new Sathya Sai Schools, the appointment of the Board of Governors of the new school, the appointment of the Principal, and the role of the ISSE and the Director in the planning of a new Sathya Sai School are satisfactory. However it was noted that new Sathya Sai Schools should be established only with full forward financial planning as laid out in the Guidelines for Sathya Sai Schools and the ISSE should be involved in all decisions.
- There was agreement that guidelines should be consistent for all ISSEs and for all Sathya Sai Schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The ISSEs should conduct regular audits of their performance and match these to their 5-year Action Plans. This should be shared with the EC in their Annual Report to the EC.

Session 4: Accreditation, Recognition and Finance

There was a lively focus on the desirability of all ISSEs and Sathya Sai Schools to gain recognition by relevant educational authorities as training organizations. This recognition has been gained in some countries while others are working towards this. Several countries face a variety of challenges including misunderstanding of the nature of Sathya Sai institutions.

- Financial viability is essential for Sathya Sai Schools. This should be scrutinized thoroughly before any new School is proposed. The present responsibility for finance rests on the Sathya Sai Organisation which should receive donations for the School. Funds should be raised by strictly adhering to Sathya Sai Baba's teachings on handling and raising money for selfless projects. The non-commercial nature of Sathya Sai Education should be upheld. Ideally the money should be channeled through an Education Trust to the School (and the ISSE) so there is total transparency. The current Guidelines on finance for the Sathya Sai Schools are adequate.
- The governance structure of Sathya Sai Schools should ensure transparency, accountability, and quality. To that end, there should be regular reports to the ISSE (with a copy to the SSO), and annual audits by external auditors. The governing body of the School should have a constitution and guidelines based on the laws of the land.
- Sathya Sai Schools should be accredited by the EC. Such accreditation should be contingent on the school meeting all the requirements in the Guidelines. These include all teachers completing SSEHV training by the ISSE, the School providing free tuition, responsible funds management, establishing and integrating a good Human Values program into all aspects of the school policy and operations, a good

governance structure, and financial viability of the school. Ideally there should be integration between the EC accreditation and that by the local Ministry of Education.

- Participants deliberated on how best to keep ISSE alumni engaged and involved with their ISSEs. In a number of countries the alumni are actively involved in SSEHV programs, but these are not under the oversight of the ISSEs as there is no system in place to keep in regular touch with alumni. The ISSEs should consider appointing an alumni coordinator to keep in touch with all the SSEHV initiatives.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. All ISSEs should actively pursue recognition of their courses by the relevant authorities in their countries.
2. All ISSEs should form an active alumni group particularly with those involved in SSEHV.
3. All Sathya Sai Schools should send an Annual Report to the EC giving their current status with respect to accreditation with the local Ministry of Education as well as on their performance, number of students, and outstanding achievements.

Action Point

1. The EC will set up an accreditation process for Sathya Sai Schools. It will also set up a Sathya Sai Schools Accreditation Committee.

Session 6: Sathya Sai Ideal Parenting

Following an invited presentation on the experience of Dynamic Parenting program at the Conference, there was keen interest in a needs analysis and implementation of Human Values-based parenting programs in the community and in Schools in many countries. Discussion centred on how the form and function of the family has changed in recent years and the increasing numbers of families in crisis. The majority of parents are confused about their roles.

- Human Values-based programs are needed in a variety of languages. The language has to be appropriate and in some countries this would mean more secularly-oriented parenting programs. The current material could be enriched with innovative approaches using culturally relevant materials, interactive family retreats, values-based songs, and activities in workshops and on (website and) the Internet.
- The bottle neck in launching initiatives in parenting is the availability of trained facilitators. Training should be provided to specially selected facilitators with sound knowledge of SSEHV. They should be trained in family dynamics and given skills to

emphasise the role of Human Values in family function in which parents are the role models. For meeting specific needs of the family e.g., drug addiction, poverty, family violence, facilitators will need to be given special training and skills. The training of the facilitators of parenting programs is the responsibility of the ISSEs. The current material on parenting in the various ISSEs should be made more widely available for sharing.

- Attendance could be enhanced with a targeted marketing strategy, by offering engaging programs relevant to the needs of parents, and workshops on special topics; e.g., teenage parenting, young adults leaving home for college, nutrition, family communication, goal-setting, improving communications with children, etc., , and providing childcare facilities for small children.
- All Sathya Sai Schools should have a mandatory interactive program for parents. This parenting program should emphasise a seamless integration of objectives of SSEHV for the children in the School. Questionnaires and survey forms may be used to determine the specific needs of a parenting program. Interest in parenting programs could be enhanced if the School strengthens its relationship with its parents through family days, luncheons, involvement in School activities such as drama, music, and field work, and extracurricular activities, such as yoga, biking, and other activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Sathya Sai Institutes should commence Human Values for Parents program. If an ISSE does not have access to resources they may request resource materials from the EC.
2. All ISSEs should develop programs for the training of facilitators for the Parenting Program. This training should be offered to those who have completed their SSEHV training.
3. All Sathya Sai Schools should have an active Human Values for Parents Program. Program coordinators should facilitate attendance by stimulating interest and offering courses when parents are available to to attend.

Session 7: Sathya Sai Ideal Partnership Program

Participants analysed the challenges to successful School Partnership Programs, identifying critical elements to be considered prior to initiating or expanding programs.

- Obstacles to programs and ways to overcome these obstacles were identified, noting that the ISSEs could be more active if the resources for SSEHV programs for Schools were centralized and facilitators given specialized training for community initiatives. Structured SSEHV programs and guidelines, media packs, videos and DVDs, booklets to explain the effectiveness of SSEHV, etc. are needed.

- In addition to Schools initiatives, a range of other areas of interest to the community could be considered. Such initiatives could be based on identified local community issues. Programs developed by one ISSE should be translated into several languages and made available to other ISSEs. This would assist launch of similar SSEHV programs in other countries.
- ISSEs should be in charge of all SSEHV initiatives and undertake appropriate training of the facilitators. Two important points emerged from the discussions amongst the participants: how best to ensure sustainability of the programs, and the need to identify community institutions for which specialized programs may be developed. These could include youth agencies, adult literacy classes, school administrators, religious educators and parents, etc. SSEHV events such as Human Values assemblies, creative arts and drama expos, father's and mother's days could also be utilised to launch innovative programs. Identified gaps in SSEHV initiatives include insufficient number of facilitators, failure to keep track of SSEHV projects, inadequate follow-up in training of facilitators, and poor contact with government agencies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. ISSEs should be in charge of all SSEHV initiatives.
2. The EC encourages ISSEs to develop new initiatives in SSEHV in a variety of topics of relevance to the local communities.
3. In addition to the Schools' SSEHV programs, the EC recommends a variety of initiatives in SSEHV to meet community needs. Those ISSEs which have successful programs are invited to make their material available to the EC for placing on its website for sharing. The EC will undertake a preliminary assessment before placing the material on its website.

Action Point

1. EC will make a central collection of the best SSEHV resources for Schools on its web site for wide dissemination.

Session 8: Sathya Sai Ideal Community Partnerships

Many of the challenges to Partnership Programs are directly relevant to Community Partnerships. These include a knowledge of where and how to start a program, lack of historical credibility of SSEHV programs and lack of availability of SSEHV programs of high quality. Inadequate planning, insufficient funds and lack of trained volunteers may hamper sustainability of the SSEHV programs.

- A good needs analysis is the first step in identifying the area of engagement with the community for SSEHV programs.
- The approach in SSEHV should include universal prayers rather than mantras. Quotations used should be from all religions and also from many wisdom traditions. Generic terminology should be used to express Divinity; e.g., Supreme Being, Consciousness, Higher Self. Sathya Sai Baba should be referred to as a humanitarian, a Chancellor of a university, or an educationist. In SSEHV it is His teachings that are emphasized, not His personality. SSEHV programs are for both adults and children and for devotees and non-devotees.
- SSEHV facilitators should be given extended training which goes beyond introductory, intermediate, and final SSEHV training. Training of SSEHV workers is the responsibility of the ISSE. SSEHV facilitators need to have highly developed skills of interacting with the public as well as specialized knowledge and expertise in the area of their public engagement; e.g., parenting, nutrition, youth issues etc. Programs need to be developed in many areas. There should be sharing of resources between the ISSEs. Training of community SSEHV facilitators should include information on working with sensitive issues, improving cultural understanding, and how to introduce SSEHV program to the community using appropriate language. All SSEHV facilitators should attend annual and refresher/enrichment training by the ISSE. Quarterly reports of all SSEHV programs should be sent to the ISSE for evaluation of outcomes.
- A variety of channels may be utilised in publicising availability of an SSEHV program. These include council bulletins, local radio stations, newsletters, websites, display of SSEHV material at public events, and presentation to community leaders. Well-conducted service projects also attract attention and these may provide an entry into community SSEHV.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. EC invites ISSEs with experience in successful SSEHV projects to share views on what contributed to their success, what hurdles were encountered and how they were overcome as well as on sustainability of SSEHV projects.
2. A sustainability SSEHV model needs to be developed

Session 10: SSEHV in the Community – Innovative Programs

This session explored innovative ways to bring SSEHV to the community, including offering Short Courses in SSEHV, adult SSEHV programs, and other possible venues apart from schools and community agencies. Topics for the community could include: family/child abuse, parenting, and raising awareness of teachers in integrating values into education. Courses for adolescents could be on peer pressure, drug awareness/alcohol abuse; environmental

awareness, creative arts/crafts, music, sports, hygiene, and cyber bullying. For adults, courses could include empowerment projects, adult literacy, work life balance, and unemployment. For corporate venues, topics could focus on vision and goals, business ethics, raising worker morale, time and money management, team building, etc. SSEHV could be integrated with medicare/sociocare programs.

ISSEs should explore the possibility of launching Human Values programs in vulnerable segments of the society, e.g., hospitals, nursing homes, senior citizen centers, prisons, juvenile detention centers, orphanages, homeless shelters rehabilitation centers, homes for under-privileged, physically challenged, or victims of abuse. They may also explore the possibility of SSEHV programs for State Schools, professional groups (doctors, engineers, pharmacists, etc.), agricultural/marketing workers (e.g., farmers), and law-enforcement workers. Target audiences could include parents, disadvantaged groups, senior citizens, youth, immigrants, women's groups, medical professionals, educators, workplaces and prisoners.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. SSEHV Short Courses should be dynamic, inspiring, and motivational. Materials for these courses must be of high quality, simple and easy to understand, and in the local language. There should be sufficient resources (handouts, materials, financial, human). The courses should be experiential and positive and delivered with Love. The courses may be delivered in conjunction with other events, e.g., medical camps and sports events.
2. These courses would be best delivered in a continuing partnership with community organizations that have an existing or a long-term relationship with the SSO and the ISSE. Implementation of such courses needs to be flexible to accommodate the culture of the community. A coordinator appointed by the ISSE should ensure adequate follow-up after the courses. For some of the courses the ISSE may look into the possibility of accreditation by the local Ministry.
3. The EC invites sharing of materials on innovative SSEHV projects.

Session 11: Global Reach of SSEHV

During this session, participants discussed their overall future vision for Sathya Sai Education. Discussions included the scope of programs, role of ISSEs, delivery styles, and whether there should be an exclusive emphasis on a particular topic.

- The overarching vision for the future is to bring SSEHV to the whole world; SSEHV should reach every child and every school. This can be achieved more readily and speedily if the ISSEs share their resources effectively and utilize the vast range of currently available technology. This could include websites with multimedia content, positive case studies, and news articles. ISSEs could be more actively increasing

awareness through TV, radio, newspapers, and magazines, by arranging public events, conferences, and workshops, and even establishing an international SSEHV journal. ISSEs should engage more actively with the local universities and establish links with them for university courses. The ISSEs should position themselves as Human Values consultants with the local authorities.

- An international website should be established to house all material from all the ISSEs and this should become a one-stop resource centre with a global portal. This site should also have teaching material, lesson plans, songs, and activities from the Sathya Sai Schools. It should carry information on all the SSEHV conferences around the world. Exchange of brief reports on special programs in different ISSEs should be shared among ISSEs and facilitated by the Education Committee through the website.
- Development of ISSEs should be coordinated by the Education Committee. ISSEs should consider dividing into faculties – research, training, communication, etc.
- SSEHV programs should be standardized and translated into many languages.
- An obstacle often encountered when attempting to promote SSEHV programs is a lack of evidence that demonstrates effectiveness of these programs. Research programs need to be designed to allow collection of high quality empirical data. Evaluation of the results is critical for gaining credibility with mainstream educators. Research programs should be designed by skilled researchers to demonstrate the impact of Sathya Sai education on students, teachers, and families.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The EC will establish a website for sharing of experiences, materials, and resources for SSEHV projects.
2. The EC encourages active research on the impact of SSEHV programs and projects in order to enhance credibility of our programs.
3. The EC invites expressions of interest by ISSEs to collaborate in research on such projects.