



## A white paper on Ethics

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Ethics are central to all human development in the current knowledge era where technological innovations and human organisations are playing a pivotal role in shaping the pace and progress of societies. The most effective way to bring ethical consciousness to play its rightful role is to build it from the very early stage of person's life, particularly from primary education stage itself. Given the complexity of structures which navigate the enormously diverse functions and professions in society, the codes and standards in various professions had been instrumental value in the practice of ethics. In this context, the Indian heritage and traditions could be of seminal value for the development of ethics. The current trend of educational reform to provide student centric and holistic education finds its echoes from the rich heritage in ancient India which used to inculcate spirit of equality, social awareness and practical efficiency in pupils and thus leading the education system towards the highest level.

The driving vision of knowledge society and an ideal student teacher relationship, which were the main pillars of the ancient Gurukul system, were also the key motive forces for growth of indigenous education systems to great heights in the form of well-established institutions of universal fame. The ethos, principles and the philosophy of such a system if adapted to the current times and assimilated into the national education systems, it can be transformative. The system saw that the teacher irrespective of the subject taught was fired by the idea of transferring the cultural and intellectual treasure bequeathed successively passed to the next generation with further value addition in terms of new theories, discoveries and monographs. The missing synchrony in the current student-teacher relationship with the emotional concept of belonging to a hoary intellectual heritage needs to be restored.

Ethical practices in different professional streams and those within the corporate world

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as well as other types of institutions vary but yet an assimilation of essential principles into the very culture of those systems remain relevant, Advances in modern information and communication technologies which enhance access to modern information and knowledge and provides diverse learning tools in learner centric environments should be taken advantage of. Their use should ensure inclusivity and an understanding of what is right and what is wrong, should remain at the core of all learning and action.

It is necessary to recognise the dynamic nature of ethical standards evolved by the professional societies and there is continued need to renew and keep them updated in the light of new challenges in the environment. Ethics can more powerfully be imparted through real life examples and role models. Recognition by the professional societies of such role models and exemplary behavior will go a long way to inspire ethical behavior in society. Learned societies can also play a role in bringing out case studies and publications in this field which will be of immense value.

Educational institutions can also benefit from explicit statement of professional code of ethics and also organized mechanisms for promoting social activity. Human Network Academy in Jain University and Universal Human Value Cell in the Visvesvaraya Technological University are some examples. Growth of such units and creating channels for expression of views and ideas from younger generation on the themes related to ethics should be encouraged.

Ethical questions relating to human interactions with environment is receiving greater and greater attention in the recent times. Issues related to climate change has come into sharp focus globally, bringing in the questions relating to the diversity of policies and standards in different countries and also varying implications of common global policies and approaches for preservation of the environment. Conflict between the development and livelihood questions and conservation of environment have also been posing critical questions in the national context. In pursuance to the judgment of Supreme Court of India, all higher education institutions in the country have been directed to include environmental science/studies in their curricula since 2013. Education in courses relevant to environment in the higher education institutions are benefitted by several career opportunities which are opening up. Academia needs to review and provide inputs for updating and diversifying curricula in the light of constantly unfolding research and applications in the fields related to environment. There is need for mission mode focus to tackle many issues like solid waste management, particularly the plastic wastes. It is noted that 5 to 6% of the total municipal solid waste is plastics. Among the endeavours to recycle plastics, progressive down cycling can be adopted as an option. For example, PET bottles are being recycled to produce T-shirts. There should also be effort to generate credible and actionable data.

