



Research Foundation
for Governance : in India



Liberal Youth Forum
Youth Uniting for a Freer India

Summary of the Seminar

ARE STUDENTS LOSING INTEREST IN COLLEGE GOVERNANCE?

22nd July 2011

10:00 AM to 2:00 PM

Ahmedabad Management Association

On Friday, 22nd July 2011, Research Foundation for Governance in India organized a half-day seminar on 'Are students losing interest in campus governance?' in partnership with the Liberal Youth Forum, New Delhi at the Ahmedabad Management Association (AMA). Around 60 students from more than seven campus across the cities participated in the seminar.

The seminar began with the introduction of participants and their take on campus governance. A lot of students felt that the seminar was a very good initiative as it provided a platform for students to discuss issues related to campus governance and how to resolve them. Students felt the need for transforming the education system by bringing transparency in the college administration and by creating better coordination between the students and the authorities. Some students also opined that education has become a business today and the campuses are governed through political interests. The college campuses must be used as platforms for improving leadership skills of the students, who are the future leaders and involve them in the governance issues from student life itself. It was really crucial, for some of them, to take part in such events and seminars so as to contribute better to their colleges as it provides them a larger perspective on college issues.

After the initial introduction of participants, group exercise began. Participants were divided into five groups with five permanent team leaders heading each "issue table". Groups rotated among tables to interact on all issues;



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- Students Union/ Student Representation -
A main issue raised was that most colleges do not even have a proper students council or any other form of student body. In places that do have one, the representatives are selected not elected which leads to problems of improper representation of student problems. Participants proposed a system where faculty nominates students and then election is held. Another recommendation was that UGC should make it mandatory for all colleges to have a student council or parliament to ensure there are proper channels of communications among students faculty and administration.
- Campus Facilities –
Main issues were related to hostels and libraries. Several colleges have hostels that are located far from the main campus which leads to problems of commuting and access to learning facilities. Students also expressed the need for 24 hour libraries and increased availability of course books. One solution proposed was to make some of the books available in ebook format. Poor hygiene in canteens and mess facilities was another issue. The problem was compounded in colleges which force students to pay for mess even if they don't wish to avail of the mess facility due to poor quality of food and lack of hygiene.
- Classes and Evaluation –
A major complaint from participants was that most of their teachers are uninterested in teaching them and make no effort in engaging them during lectures. Many felt that especially in the case of compulsory modules, which are not liked by all students, lecturers should make the lectures more interesting and work at increasing the motivation in students. One proposed solution was to use technology such as animated slides to make it more interactive and make the concepts easier to grasp. There were also complaints about incomplete coverage of the course and outdated material. Favouritism is rampant among the faculty. Students also wish there was more clarity regarding evaluation of tests and exams. A common grievance was that absenteeism among lecturers was not checked and no measures were taken against them.



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- Transparency –
This issue affects all other topics discussed today. Students felt that transparency in college functioning was a big issue and that quality audits should be conducted to ensure greater transparency. There was general complaint about college administration being lethargic and not giving serious attention when students bring issues to their notice. Students want swifter response and action reports indicating what has been done to solve the issues. The issue of revaluation also came up with more students wishing there was greater clarity in the revaluation procedure and that information about it was made available more easily.
- Student Life –
Students discussed what aspects of college life they enjoyed and disliked. Being a part of the college atmosphere and meeting new people was widely liked. Students also enjoyed being part of various clubs as it increased their exposure and developed various skills. Common problems faced during this phase were lack of sleep, irregular hours, peer pressure and other pressures.

After the group exercise and churning of issues, Mr. Rajan Singh of the Liberal Youth Forum addressed the gathering on Campus Governance and Campus Pulse Project. Mr. Singh spoke about the general aims of LYF and how it focuses on getting the youth to identify problems within their day to day lives and the ways they can deal with them. He spoke of the need for students to take greater interest in the functioning of their own institutes and colleges in order to make them more transparent and accountable. He strongly advocated the use of RTI as a cheap and effective tool to clean up governance at college level and that LYF is willing to file RTI applications on students' behalf to prevent backlash from authority. He also outlined other ways in which LYF can help students improve campus governance from guidance on issues to workshops on leadership.

Mr. Singh's talk was followed by the address of Ms. Kanan Dhru of RFGI, who talked to students on How should the students participate in campus governance? Ms. Dhru spoke about the role of RFGI and its recent initiatives and activities. She invited students to bring up more issues that they would like RFGI to highlight and that RFGI would act as local support for LYF in its mission to improve campus governance. Through a few inspiring stories, she conveyed to the students the need for worthy role models for the youth and



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how through the small measures discussed in the seminar, they could do their bit towards the larger issue of better governance.

Ms. Nupur Hasija from FNST summed up the topics and solutions discussed in the seminar and spoke about the various ways in which students could join the movement. She explained about the numerous internships, workshops and online seminars that were held by LYF and FNST.