

# **Impact of a Credit Course on Universal Human Values and Ethics on the Conduct of the Students in Higher Education**

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## **Abstract**

A credit course on Universal Human Values and Ethics has been running across many universities of the country for the past few years. The course discusses issues which are very basic to a happy and prosperous life of a human being. The content is shared in the form of a proposal for self-verification, self-validation by the students. Students reflect on the content on the basis of their natural acceptance and also validate it in their living. The complete content of the course has been designed in a way so that it is universal, rational, verifiable and leading to harmony.

In 2013, Galgotias University in Gautam Buddha Nagar district of Uttar Pradesh, India started running such a full-semester three-credit course (course code LLL-101). After the completion of the course, a survey was conducted every semester to evaluate its impact on the conduct of the students. One of the survey results and their analysis is discussed in this paper. This survey was earlier shared at the Fourth International Conference on Human Values in Higher Education in Bhutan in 2015.

The survey suggests that the course has been transformational in terms of starting a process of self-exploration and reflective thinking in the students. The students develop holistic perspective of life, an understanding of the need for physical facilities in life, the underlying feelings for harmonious relationship, co-existence of human order with the nature around, and are able to overcome negative emotions through this course within a short span of time. It also suggests that values can be inculcated among the students of higher education through classroom inputs if the pedagogy includes explorational techniques, open discussion and creative individual and group level practice sessions.

These outcomes suggest immense possibilities for higher education – starting with value education to value-based education leading to value-based living.

## **1. Introduction**

Each one of us wants to live a fulfilling life. To ensure a fulfilling life, there are two fundamental questions to be addressed:

1. What is the basic human aspiration?
2. What is the program for its fulfillment?

Education needs to address these two questions holistically in a manner that every student is able to explore into the human reality and understand it on one's own right without being dependent on any dogma or belief. At the individual level, it helps to ensure a fulfilling life at every level of living, be it within oneself or family or society or nature. At the societal level, it helps develop a humane culture and civilization which goes as a human tradition from one generation to another. Such an education can be termed as value based education, skill education being a part of it.

## **2. What is UHV (Universal Human Values)?**

Value is participation in the larger order [1]. As a human being, each one of us is participating in the larger order such as family, society or nature. This is our value. In our relationship with human being, we naturally accept to participate with the feelings of trust, respect, love which are values in relationship. These foundational human values are universal, and apply to every human being, irrespective of time, place and situation. They define the role of human being in this existence – in relation to oneself, in relation to the other human beings and in relation to the rest of nature. In other words, UHV is about human being living with happiness and prosperity in a sustainable manner, in co-existence with the society and nature around. When it comes to living, the values get expressed differently in different cultures. For example, the value of respect may be expressed by embracing each other in one culture, by shaking hands in another culture and by bowing down in some other culture. But the value of respect remains universal.

## **3. Credit Course on Universal Human Values and Ethics**

At the State University of Uttar Pradesh, Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam Technical University, the course titled A Foundation Course in Human Values and Professional Ethics was started in the year 2009 as an Audit Course. To teach the course effectively, eight-day residential workshops on the course were conducted for the faculty regularly which enabled development of sufficient number of faculty for the course. But it was found that the course being an audit course was not taken very seriously by majority of students. Hence it was converted into a credit course in subsequent years. This was followed by other universities of the country including Punjab Technical University, Bikaner Technical University among others. In 2013, this course was started at a private university of Uttar Pradesh called as Galgotias University.

## **4. Experiments at Galgotias University**

At Galgotias University (GU), the course titled Universal Human Values and Ethics with the course code LLL 101 and credit structure L-T-P-C 3-0-0-3 was started in the year 2013 under the School of Life Long Learning (SLLL) for the following schools:

- School of Architecture
- School of Basic and Applied Sciences
- School of Computer Science and Engineering
- School of Chemical Engineering
- School of Civil Engineering
- School of Education
- School of Electrical, Electronics and Communication Engineering
- School of Finance and Commerce
- School of Hospitality
- School of Humanities and Social Sciences
- School of Mechanical Engineering

- School of Nursing

Total number of students was about 2800 in the year 2013-14. To begin with, the then Vice-chancellor of the University attended the conference on Human Values at IIT Hyderabad in the year 2013. Then, a one-day workshop was organized at the university on the importance and content of the course which was participated by the top management and faculty of GU, and Heads of different Institutions where the course was running. After the One-day Workshop, the faculty from different schools were encouraged to undergo an orientation program in the summer that followed. It was made clear to all the schools that teaching of the course will not be restricted to faculty of Life Long Learning or Social Sciences, but rather faculty of respective schools will be required to teach their own students. In the process, 7 week-long, 1 four-day, 1 three-day and 1 two-day workshops were organized at the university. Subsequently, the teaching of the course was started with half of the students at the University. The faculty having attended the workshop, and those teaching the course felt quite enthused to start a regular meeting at the University so that the content could be explored in depth. Thus, a regular meeting was started with the faculty every Friday for about two hours where the lectures in the next week were discussed. In addition, weekly meetings started being organized every Sunday with faculty and their family members at their residence in the city. Generally, the meetings were held in rotation at the houses of faculty so that the family members could also be involved in the discussion, and the programs. This further added to the impact of the course as the faculty could now relate the course better to their day-to-day life.

Every course has an examination, and so with this course. In the beginning only, it was decided that the course will have credits, and the students will have to undergo it the same way as any other course. It was also planned that the question papers will be set so as to promote self-exploration (at least 25% of questions were designed to be Higher Order Thinking questions in the examination). This was planned with a view to avoid the students to learn this course by rote, and at the same time, have the clarity of the concepts discussed in the class. During the semester, the students were encouraged to interact personally with the faculty after the class to clear their doubts. At the end of every semester, a Student Course Opinion Survey was also conducted to work out ways for further improvement. The results of one such course survey conducted in the Winter Semester, 2015 is given here.

## **5. Survey on the Impact of the Course on the Students**

- 18 Sections of students studied the course
- The total number of students who studied in the semester was about 1000
- The course was taught by 16 instructors as 3 lecture hours
- Fifteen questions were included in the survey
- The last question asked them to give their feedback in their own words.
- The survey was conducted by a faculty who was not teaching that section so that the responses were unbiased.

The statistical summary of answers in the rest fourteen questions follows. The numbers in the table indicate the following:

5- strongly agree, 4- agree, 3-partially agree and partially disagree, 2- disagree and 1-strongly disagree

Question	Response				
1. As a result of the Universal Human Values and Ethics (UHVE) course do you feel that your understanding of physical facility in life as a university student is better than before?	Yes (78%)		No (22%)		
2. Your motivation to attend UHVE classes and to participate actively in discussions increased during the semester.	Yes (77%)		No (23%)		
3. As a result of the UHVE course your understanding of the purpose of education is better. You are motivated to attend classes in the current and future semesters and become more attentive in class.	5 (38%)	4 (38%)	3 (15%)	2 (3%)	1 (6%)
4. As a result of the course, you are clearer of the true meaning of happiness.	5 (49%)	4 (28%)	3 (14%)	2 (4%)	1 (5%)
5. Universal Human Values can be taught and discussed with preciseness like any other subject.	5 (35%)	4 (34%)	3 (20%)	2 (6%)	1 (5%)
6. Universal Human Values can be practiced by individual.	5 (50%)	4 (30%)	3 (12%)	2 (3%)	1 (5%)
7. I see that the unhappiness is more due to lack of fulfillment in relationship than due to lack of physical facility.	5 (54%)	4 (26%)	3 (14%)	2 (3%)	1 (3%)
8. My negative emotions (doubt on intention, anger, greed, jealousy, irritation etc.) have reduced as a result of Universal Human Values education.	5 (29%)	4 (35%)	3 (20%)	2 (5%)	1 (11%)
9. Did the UHVE course help you in understanding relationships; and as a result, you will try to develop better relationships and more meaningful interactions with your : a. Parents b. Teachers c. Friends	Yes (87%)		No (13%)		
	Yes (83%)		No (17%)		
	Yes (84%)		No (16%)		
10. I would like to share the content of course with my friends and family.	Y (81%)		N (19%)		
11. The contents of the UHVE course are appropriate for University students. You feel that you can be more self-disciplined and this has helped in your transition from School to a University.	5 (33%)	4 (38%)	3 (18%)	2 (6%)	1 (5%)
12. The examinations in the UHVE course were of appropriate level and tested your understanding of the subject matter.	5 (32%)	4 (37%)	3 (18%)	2 (6%)	1 (7%)
13. The teacher provided effective motivation and support for understanding	5 (48%)	4 (29%)	3 (12%)	2 (4%)	1 (7%)
14. The UHVE experience was transformational in terms of starting a process of self-exploration and reflective thinking in you.	5 (39%)	4 (37%)	3 (16%)	2 (3%)	1 (5%)

## 6. Analysis of the Survey

An analysis of the survey shows the following:

1. The course on Human Values is teachable. Within a semester, the students are able to grasp the concepts taught in the class to a large extent.

2. Some of the students have responded to the survey saying that they strongly agree or disagree. This indicates that the opinions of the students have not been influenced by the faculty teaching the course.
3. The percentage of students who strongly agree and agree to the questions regarding the practicability of the proposals put forward in the class has been high, indicating that the course is effective in conveying the practice of human values in living.
4. The course has been highly effective in improving the relationship of the students, within as well as outside the family.
6. The course has been effective in improving the motivation of the students in their studies, enhancing the sense of happiness and prosperity, reducing the negative emotions and initiating the process of self-exploration in the students which proves effective in all walks of life.

### **7. Conclusion and Scope for Future Work**

As a conclusion, the course has been highly effective in starting a process of self-exploration in the students, developing an understanding in the students regarding their physical needs, their relationships with family and friends, their participation in the society at large, and making the higher education more valuable (rather than limiting it to meager skill impartment). Such inputs need to be made available to all institutes of higher education, in India and world.

Based on the feedback obtained from the faculty and students through personal interaction, the following inputs can be given in addition for better results:

1. Tutorial classes added with lectures will help the understanding of the students better. For the tutorial, the classes can be split into smaller groups, and the students can be encouraged to discuss and explore.
2. Assignments and projects which reinforce the inputs given in the class add to the effectiveness of the course.
3. The association of faculty with the students with a feeling of relationship adds further value to the course.
4. Some higher level courses based on Human Values can be introduced in the University to further the holistic development of the students.
5. Activities which present ways to the students to participate in the larger order in society and nature can be included in the educational programs of the students.

This course is being run presently in the universities of India and Bhutan, and slowly it needs to be taken to every university of the world. Recently, All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE) has made it a mandatory 3-credit course for all the undergraduate engineering courses across the country. Few universities are also offering some higher level courses as electives in third and fourth years of the bachelor level courses in technical education. The National Education Policy 2020 has also laid significant stress on value based education leading to value based living for a just and equitable society in a sustainable manner.

### **Acknowledgement**

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**References:**

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