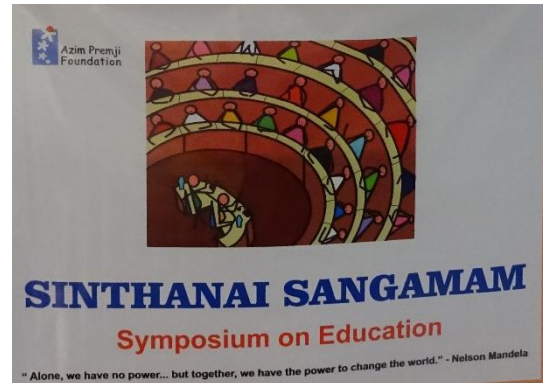


Sinthanai Sangamam - Puducherry

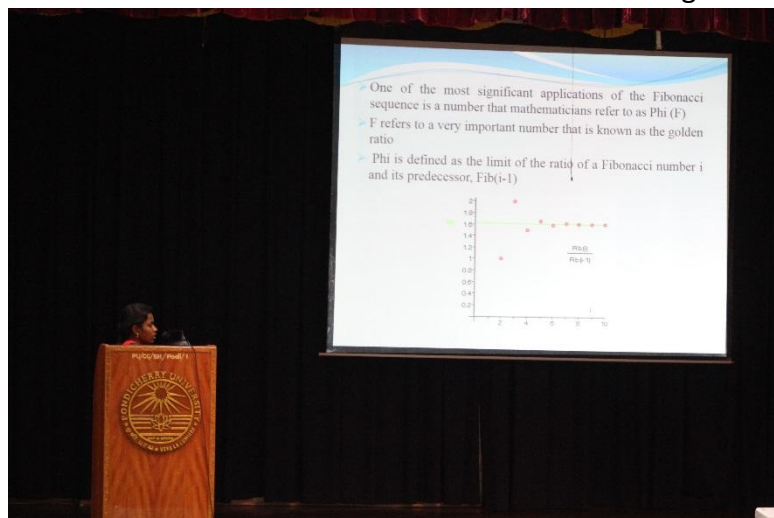
Azim Premji Foundation, Puducherry organized its first annual symposium on education 'Sinthanai Sangamam' - a forum for youth who share a passion for improving education for a better society.

The symposium was organized as part of our environment building initiatives from both recruitment and admissions perspective. The target audience were post graduate and doctoral students who would be interested to work in the field of education and undergraduate students who could pursue postgraduate programs at the university. Colleges across Tamil Nadu, Pondicherry and Kerala were reached out to inviting paper presentations/videos/case studies on various themes related to education. Ten teams were shortlisted to present at the symposium and students from colleges in Pondicherry were invited to attend the symposium. 239 students from 17 institutions attended the symposium that was held at the Convention Hall of Pondicherry University on 6th February, 2016.



Event Highlights

'Essay Writing' - The program started with an essay writing competition for the participants. Interested students were asked to write their thoughts on 'My dream society'.



Paper presentations - The presentations shortlisted for the symposium were based on seven themes - 'Early childhood education', 'Math around us', 'Education for a better society', 'Holistic education' etc. This included three short films and seven power point presentations. Each team was given 20 minutes for presentation followed by ten minutes for Q&A.

The panel of judges comprised of two eminent educationists - Dr. Anil Sethi from Azim Premji University and Mr. Shankar, Principal, Aikyam School, Auroville.

Snippets of presentations made by students

Education for better society – Only when every individual in the society gets educated can that society progress. Equally important is to educate women in that society. Education helps an individual overcome most social barriers like caste, age, economy etc. While there has been progress in terms of infrastructure, there is a decline in the number of teachers' available in rural areas. How can one provide good education without teachers... The current system of education does not promote learning among students either – the all pass system discourages children from learning and the term wise syllabus makes it easier for them to forget lessons learnt in the previous term. Addressing and reversing some of these issues are important to give students good education to thereby create a better society. Education must create individuals with social consciousness and a sense of service to the society. An ideal school caters to the physical, emotional and intellectual needs of the students. Public schools with teachers who are sensitive to the needs of the students and that provide an ideal learning environment is what it takes to build a good society.



Early Childhood Education – Early childhood education must be designed in a manner that is enjoyable and interesting to the children. They must not get terrified at the idea of the school and must rather develop love for learning. Learning in their mother tongue enables them to learn faster and other languages can be introduced gradually. Children must be given space to voice their thoughts which will help build their self-esteem.

Math around us – Mathematics is not confined to textbooks but is present naturally, all around us. It occurs as patterns in the notes of music, in the arrangement of petals in flowers etc. It was used in architecture to construct ancient monuments like the Collosium, Pyramids etc.

After each presentation, there was an interaction with the audience and the best three questions from the audience were also given prizes.

Guest Lectures



Careers in Education - There was an interactive session on 'Careers in Education' by Dr. Rajgopal from Azim Premji University. Dr. Rajgopal introduced the social sector to the audience explaining its relevance and need in the society quoting data from UN reports to show where India stands in the development index. He further talked about the work that NGOs are doing giving examples of organizations that work in the field of health, education and livelihoods. He talked about the possibilities of careers in these organizations and other related areas mentioning policy and

governance, funding organizations etc. He emphasized that to work in the social sector, one must develop an understanding of the society and issues related to society. It therefore calls for trained people to contribute to this sector. At this point he talked about the various full time courses that one can pursue in universities like TISS and APU.

'Education for a better Society' – Dr. Lalithamma, Former Dean, School of Education, Pondicherry University addressed the gathering on 'Education for a better society'. According to her, everything we teach a child cannot be called as education. Education always has a positive connotation. Nobody teaches a child to steal rather one educates a child not to steal. When we change the direction of our thoughts and actions from its current state towards a better and desirable state – we called that education. Desirable is that which is good for the society, where people live in harmony, with mutual respect for each other and one must educate the members of the society to live these values. Education begins from birth and continues all the way till the end. While school plays the role of formal education, informal education begins at home where the child learns from parents and others in the family. Creating a feel good atmosphere that is conducive for learning is important in educating a person. Apart from subjects, one must impart moral values and ethics so that a desirable good society can be built.

Valedictory

The first prize was bagged by John Kenedu, Vijay, Meiyarasu and Mani - the team from St. Joseph College for their short film. The second prize was won by Anto Freeda, Logeswari, Subadhra and Sathya from Stella Mary's College and the third prize winner was E. Mahalakshmi from Sarah Tucker College.



Judges' comments - After the presentations were over, Dr. Anil Sethi spoke about the significance of such symposiums. These forums encourage students to take up courses in humanities and social sciences and enable them to contribute to the social sector. He congratulated the students for having displayed interest and passion towards social issues while cautioning them that they must engage more deeply with these issues in education and develop a deeper understanding of the topic while preparing for such presentations and not borrow ideas from the internet. Dr. Sethi concluded saying this should be made a regular annual event.



Mr. Shankar congratulated and appreciated each team for their efforts while announcing the prize winners. He mentioned that the winners were selected for their originality of thought, relevance to the topic, content depth and creativity.