

Friends,

I made some impromptu remarks at the beginning of the first Young Teachers Training Programme the Council organized from March 24 to 26. I am giving them below to outline the background and the objectives of the programme. Comments and new ideas are welcome.  
Sincerely,

TPS

I am most delighted to inaugurate this Young Teachers Training Programme, the first of its kind, organized by the Kerala State Higher Education Council. We have no ceremonies or rituals, only our sincere efforts to make it a success.

Teachers are at the centre of education and pursuit of excellence must begin with them. Strangely, college teachers are the only professionals, who do not need any training before they begin their careers. For this reason, we had begun the work on a Faculty Training Academy two years ago. A team of eminent experts drew up a plan in every detail and the Government approved and even made financial allocation for it. But the project is still on paper on account of the usual rigmarole associated with such initiatives. We have decided to launch this programme, within the limited resources available to us so as not to lose precious time.

There may be talented and gifted teachers among you and you may have begun your careers with commitment and enthusiasm. But nobody can be a good teacher without appropriate training in pedagogy, knowledge enhancement, research and use of technology. Our idea, therefore, is to make it compulsory for young teachers to undergo a programme of training before they begin their teaching careers. Subsequently, career advancement should be contingent upon performance to be judged by your seniors, your peers and your students. I know that it is not practical for us to give short-term contracts to the teachers, as in some other countries, but we should have incentives to encourage good teachers and to reward them. The Council is working on this idea.

I would not like this programme to become a seminar or a debating exercise. I would like you to discuss with your resource persons your needs as teachers and seek their guidance on the topics you teach and the methodology of teaching. At the end of the programme, I would like you to demonstrate what you have learnt and get evaluated. One thing that the teachers never do in our universities is to sit in the classes of other teachers and learn from them. This is an opportunity for you to observe others and to learn.

We have taken care to include in this programme use of technology, which is transforming the way people teach and learn around the world. India is one of the countries that use Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCS) the most in the world, but Kerala is far behind. We do not have enough infrastructure to introduce MOOCS and other learning facilities such as flip schools. The Council is working on an IT@ Colleges programme to equip our colleges with the necessary connectivity. But in the meantime, the computers available should be used not just to use facebook and twitter, but also the immense resources available on the net.

We are concerned about the deterioration of the standard of English in our colleges. Though the medium of instruction is English, much of the teaching takes place in Malayalam even in senior classes. Foreign students have been complaining that they are unable to follow lectures as they are

mostly in Malayalam. Many of our graduates will have to live outside Kerala and you will be placing them at a disadvantage if you do not make them proficient in English. We love our mother tongue, but we need English to be competitive. We will emphasize the importance of the use of English as the medium of instruction at this programme. We are also ready to offer English courses to those teachers who feel the need for it.

Unfortunately, I shall not be with you when you finish your course. But I shall look forward to receiving your feedback to make this programme richer.

Thank you.