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Inclusive Education – Successful conference at Baroda, India
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Internationally renowned Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda (<https://msubaroda.ac.in/>) is one of the oldest educational centres of Western India; its Faculty of Education and Psychology and its Department of Education-CASE (<https://msubaroda.ac.in/Academics/Department>), organized an international conference for the second time in January 2020. The first conference, in 2019, focused on quality teacher training (Towards Developing Professional and Humane Teachers for Quality Education). The topic of that in January 2020 was inclusive education (Inclusive Education: Present Perspectives, Future Prospects).

Csilla Fuszek at the main entrance of the conference



The 218 participants of the scientific conference came mainly from various states of India, but thanks mainly to contacts established earlier by the organizers, it was attended also by international professionals. Two persons active in different segments of education came from the United States, and one from Australia, Italy, Hungary and Bangladesh each to give an insight into the concept of inclusion from different perspectives.

The conference including 143 presentations mainly on research projects was free of charge for the participants, thanks mainly to the support granted to CASE by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India (<https://mhrd.gov.in/>): in 2017, the Department acquired so-called Inter-University Centre for Teachers Education (IUCTE) status from the Ministry, implying also financial support for organizing events of this kind. If the support continues, a third conference will also be organized in the year 2021.

Flower ornaments at the entrance to the plenary hall

The meaning of inclusion in education correlates to a large extent with the traditions, social structure and nature of inequalities in each country. This has made the content of the conference particularly interesting also for non-Indian participants.

The conference was deemed a success by one of the chief organizers, Ms Prof. Sujata Srivastava. What lay behind this success? Partly the richness of the topics represented at the conference. One of the priority

subject matters was the inclusion of students from the LGBTQ community, considered a taboo for a long time in Indian society. Note that it was only in 2018 that the Indian Supreme Court de-criminalised homosexuality – this makes the innovative power required for putting this topic on the agenda even more obvious. It is also

important to know that today the transsexual community includes nearly 4.5 million; it is no accident that the researches included the specification of methodologies to create transgender-friendly schools. Significant emphasis was given to equal access to education for boys and girls, the special educational needs of children needing special treatment, i.e. those suffering from the consequences of polio, and also to talent support.

Talent support is a brand new topic in India: the relevant initiatives and researches are very few considering the size of the country. It was a special pleasure to see that talent support researches covered in several cases the examination of the inclusion of multiply exceptional pupils (e.g. talented children suffering from some kind of disorder or handicap).

The other secret of the success of the conference was that the 5-strong organizing committee expanded into an operative group of 50 Department faculties, researchers and M.Ed.



students acted as one and did everything to make the conference a success and to ensure the smooth flow of the events, from section meetings to cultural programmes. Mr Prof. R. C Patel, Dean of the Faculty, and Ms Prof. Sujata Srivastava were present everywhere to coordinate these 50 persons. Traditionally, all Indian conferences start by a so-called Candle/Lamp-lighting Ceremony : the candles symbolize the spread of the light of knowledge, and the ceremony is repeated at the closing event of the conference.

This conference, addressing also topics discussed less openly and frequently at scientific conferences previously, lit many gorgeous lamps throughout India.