



**UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK & CPRHE/NIEPA RESEARCH PROJECT
WIDENING ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA: INSTITUTIONAL APPROACHES**

MAY 2023 VISIT TO NEW DELHI REPORT

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Purpose of visit

UK-based team members visited Dr Sabharwal at CPRHE/NIEPA in New Delhi for the project's Phase 1 pilot study and project-related meetings. The visit led to strengthening of collaborations established through the previous project and furthering collaborations for the current project. The pilot study of Phase 1 was planned and implemented smoothly over the period of the visit. A collaborative approach was also adopted to enable the participation of administrators, academics, staff and students in the pilot study. The following sections of the visit report offer an overview of the activities undertaken during the visit.

The research team arranged a series of meetings with the project collaborators in India from different higher education institutions, such as the University of Delhi, Central University of Haryana and OP Jindal University, to share the findings of the previous research project and to gain feedback and input on the current phase of the project. The collaborators were presented with a copy of the previous Fair Chance Foundation final project report. In addition to the collaborative initiatives and responsibilities, the team members engaged in team meetings to chart further steps of the research project.

Note: this report does not include the name of the pilot study college or any identifiable photographs due to the pledge of anonymity made to the college.

Saturday 29th April

Meeting with Ms Sharmila Rathee, Assistant Professor, Delhi University

Dr Henderson met with Ms Sharmila Rathee, who was a member of the Consultative Group for the first Fair Chance Foundation project. She presented Ms Rathee with the final report from the previous project. There was also a discussion of the new project and Ms Rathee gave feedback and insights on the design.

Monday 1st May

Meeting with college representative from pilot study college

A meeting was conducted with the pilot college representative. The agenda of this meeting was to orient the pilot college representative regarding the pilot procedure and to chart out a time plan for the execution of the pilot study. Dr Henderson, Dr Sabharwal (online), and Prof Stewart presented an overview and objectives of the research project. Ms Mary was also present in the meeting. The pilot college representative presented a contextual background of the pilot college. Current international collaborations, innovative practices and outreach activities in place were discussed.

Following this, Dr Henderson and Dr Sabharwal discussed the mechanism of pilot college selection. After elaborating on the context and objectives of the research study, Dr Henderson and Dr Sabharwal briefed the pilot college representative on each research instrument to be administered and tested during the

pilot study. Each research instrument was discussed in detail with the pilot college representative. The inputs offered by the college representative on the research instruments and practical implementation requirements for administering the research instruments were recorded. The research team members and the college representative then charted a time plan for the pilot study, considering the current academic and administrative workload of the pilot college. The dates for the initial pilot college visit and administering of the research instruments were finalised as 4th May, and 8th May to 10th May 2023. Further, Dr Henderson and Prof Stewart happily consented to a student interaction session on 10th May requested by the college representative.

Tuesday 2nd May

Meeting with Prof Pradeep Kumar Misra, Director of CPRHE/NIEPA

Prof Stewart and Dr Henderson met with Prof Misra to thank the CPRHE for their hospitality and support during our stay and to update him on the project activities. The final copy of the first Fair Chance Foundation project report and accompanying materials were presented to Prof Misra. Prof Misra expressed his congratulations for producing a rich report and set of materials. He also gave feedback



about the taster day resource pack ('OAR' - Outreach Activity Resource), which is designed to help colleges to organise an open day for high school students and their families to visit the college. The main comment was that this OAR should be translated into Hindi for an easier uptake by colleges. Following on from this, Prof Misra made some suggestions about how the OAR could come into the hands of college principals, for instance by collaborating with CPRHE/NIEPA to

organise a meeting of National Capital Region college principals at NIEPA to introduce the OAR and then a follow-up meeting to explore if the OAR has been implemented. Another suggestion was to perhaps organise a similar meeting in other state universities in order to ensure the OAR reaches principals in different local areas. The meeting concluded with thanks exchanged on both sides.

Tuesday 2nd May

Meeting with Dr Renu Yadav, Assistant Professor, Central University Haryana

Dr Henderson and Prof Stewart met Dr Yadav at CPRHE/NIEPA. They gave her the FCF final report, Policy Brief and OAR. They discussed possibilities of undertaking further impact related activities relating to the OAR. Dr Yadav made a number of suggestions of the way in which the team might proceed. The team agreed that organising events through the auspices of CPRHE/NIEPA would be the most appropriate way of proceeding and that it may be a good idea to involve the Central Board for Secondary Education (CBSE) to reach class 12 students through schools. Prof Stewart update Dr Yadav on the progress in relation to publication of their joint article (with Dr Sabharwal).



Tuesday 2nd May

Meeting with Prof Vineeta Sirohi, NIEPA

Dr. Henderson met with Prof. Vineeta Sirohi, who is Professor in the Department of Educational Administration NIEPA; Honorary Academic Fellow of Australia India Institute, University of Melbourne; Chief Vigilance Officer NIEPA; Chairperson Equal Opportunity Cell NIEPA; and Former Chairperson Steering Committee M.Phil-Ph.D programme NIEPA. Prof Sirohi has a Psychology background and works on areas such as educational leadership, educational management, skills and vocational education. She served as Chairperson Steering Committee M.Phil-Ph.D programme of NIEPA for over three years. Given Dr. Henderson's equivalent role in Department of Education Studies at Warwick, there was a detailed discussion on issues related to doctoral programme. Dr Henderson presented the Fair Chance Foundation first project report to Prof Sirohi, who expressed interest in the project. The meeting concluded with thanks and intentions to remain in contact.

Wednesday 3rd May

First Peer Review Meeting (Online) of the *India Higher Education Report 2024: Technology and Higher Education*

Dr Henderson was requested to serve as rapporteur for a session of the First Peer Review Meeting (Online) of the *India Higher Education Report 2024: Technology and Higher Education* (IHER). This is the edited volume that CPRHE produces each year based on a relevant theme to higher education in India. As a previous contributor to another volume of IHER and as Visiting Professor at CPRHE/NIEPA, Dr Henderson was requested to attend sessions and to contribute to the discussion. The purpose of the meeting was for chapter authors to present their abstracts and for other authors to comment, ask questions, and ensure coherence for the volume. The papers focused on technology in higher education and included comparative and India-focused chapters, and also included empirical as well as literature-

based chapter abstracts. Dr Henderson's rapporteur notes were submitted to CPRHE/NIEPA for inclusion in the IHER Meeting Report.

Thursday 4th May

Visit to Pilot College and Interview with Principal

Dr Henderson, Prof Stewart, and Ms Mary visited the pilot college as per the time plan charted with the pilot college representative. The agenda was to develop familiarity with the pilot college and to interview the college principal (institutional leader). The team was received and facilitated by a faculty member of the college, who offered a guided tour of the pilot college. Apart from getting familiarised with the physical infrastructure, the team was offered an overview of the college's various academic and co-curricular activities and initiatives, such as contributions to the Indian knowledge series, botanical gardens and events conducted by the pilot college.

The team then had an interaction with the college principal. After an initial round of introductions, the team thanked the college principal for his hospitality and offered him an overview of the research project. Dr Henderson presented a memento to the college principal. The time plan of the pilot study was presented and discussed with the college principal. The principal offered a contextual account of contributions made by the college in the broader higher education realm. Achievements and innovative practices adopted by the college were presented. A team of four faculty members were introduced to the team, who would have responsibility for organising and carrying out the pilot study in the college. Following this, Dr Henderson requested a research interview from the college principal. The college principal graciously consented to the request. Dr Henderson led the interview. After the interview, the team thanked the college principal and all the faculty members for their hospitality and collaborative efforts to undertake the pilot study.

Sunday 7th May

Meeting with Dr Manika Bora, Assistant Professor, OP Jindal University

Dr Bora met with Dr Henderson, Ms Mary and Prof Stewart. Dr Bora was a Consultative Group member for the first FCF project and played an active role in providing feedback on the project. The team presented Dr Bora with the final FCF project report. She also asked about the WAHEI project and discussed her own recent research interest on marriageability.

Monday 8th May

Fieldwork Day at Pilot College - Survey Implementation

The team reported to the pilot college in the morning and were ushered to the Principal's office. The faculty member who was organising the day's activities came to meet with the team and tea and refreshments were provided. The team were then accompanied to a board room, where faculty members were assembling. Over 50 faculty members entered the room and the team were introduced by the faculty member in charge of the interaction. Prof Stewart gave a summary of the background to the project and then Dr Henderson elaborated on the purpose of the project and the survey exercise. There was one question from a faculty member who wanted to clarify about the focus of the project on the admissions stage. The surveys were then distributed and the faculty members decided to fill them out on the spot. The team members were present in the room in order to answer any questions and to take notes of any issues experienced in the functioning of the survey. At the end, surveys were collected up and remaining faculty members were offered refreshments by the college. Meanwhile, students were assembling across three classrooms. Dr Sabharwal and Ms Mary moved to these rooms to present the project to the students and to implement the student survey. Again, they were present across the rooms in order to provide guidance and to take notes on any issues experienced. Faculty members were also present in the rooms to ensure the survey was proceeding smoothly and to assist with collecting up the surveys and handing out lunch coupons to the students (provided by the college). Following the implementation of the survey, the team were kindly invited to lunch by the college, accompanying a staff recruitment panel which was also having lunch. The team then departed the college and recorded notes of any issues with the instruments and prepared for the following day's activities.



Tuesday 9th May

Fieldwork day at Pilot College - Undergraduate Student Activities

Again, upon arrival the team reported to the Principal's office and were kindly offered tea. Once the student participants were ready, the team split into pairs and relocated to two separate rooms for the



Focus Group Discussions (FGD). The team set up each room to ensure a friendly atmosphere around the table, assisted by college staff. Each FGD consisted of five first year undergraduate students of mixed departments, gender and social groups, and each FGD was led by one team member with another team member present to operate the recording and to observe the functioning of the pilot instruments. The FGDs were successful, with students sharing their views relatively openly. Two students from each FGD (four in total) were then selected on the basis of

being quieter in the FGDs and/or representing different social groups/identities. The interviews then took place with the same team members as the FGD. The interviews were relatively short (approx. 15 minutes) but provided a good level of depth to supplement the FGDs. The students were then offered refreshments by the college and the interview participants were handed a small memento from Warwick as a sign of the team's gratitude. Following the interviews, the team was again invited to stay on at the college for lunch. The team also met with the administrative officer who was responsible for providing the administrative data on students and staff for the pilot study, to agree on ways forward for providing the requested data. Following this and further interactions with faculty members, the team departed to debrief and prepare for the following day.

Wednesday 10th May

Fieldwork day at Pilot College - Faculty Member Activities and Presentation

The team once again reported to the Principal's office upon arrival and were soon ushered to two separate rooms for the interviews with faculty members. Again, each interview was conducted by one team member, with the other team member operating the recording and observing. The interviews proceeded smoothly with fascinating insights. After the interviews, the four faculty members assembled



in one room for a short briefing about the diary study. There was a discussion of the diary form and the purpose of the study. The faculty members then proceeded to complete the first entry and handed it to the team. The team gave instructions for the remainder of the diary study and also handed the closed folder for collecting diary entries to the faculty member in charge of organising the study participation. Following this, Prof Stewart and Dr Henderson were ushered to a large room where students were waiting for an interaction with the team. The college had invited Prof Stewart and Dr Henderson to present a talk about educational opportunities in the UK, as many of the college's students consider this option after completing their undergraduate degree. Dr Henderson talked through basic aspects of the UK higher education system, including the

relative scale to Indian higher education in terms of institutions and student numbers, as well as how universities in the UK are classified. Prof Stewart discussed specifics of how to apply, including showing students how to navigate the Warwick website. Students asked some questions during the Q&A, for instance about why some students gain two Master's qualifications, and the career prospects after postgraduate study. The session ended with a vote of thanks from one of the faculty members to the team, the other faculty members, the students and the Principal. The team then resolved some final matters including receiving the student administrative data in hard copy and headed for a final lunch at the college. Following this, the team made notes on the day's proceedings and shared reflections on the pilot study as a whole.

Thursday 11th May

Meetings at NIEPA

Dr Henderson, Dr Sabharwal and Prof Stewart participated in a project planning meeting to plan next steps for the WAHEI project. A timeline for working towards the Research Methodology Workshop with the state teams in November was established, including the process for finalising the instruments and the pack to be sent to the state teams. The team also discussed next steps for handling the pilot data, and the outputs from the pilot including the pilot note and the CPRHE working paper.

Dr Sabharwal and Prof Ann Stewart met to discuss the development of their contribution to an edited collection relating to widening participation in HE legal education which builds on both the previous Fair Chance Foundation Project and additional engagement by Prof Stewart with National Law Schools in India. They agreed on the outline of content and that they would assess whether submission to the edited collection (which has a strong UK focus) would be the most appropriate place for the paper. If not, they would seek alternatives. Prof Stewart agreed to communicate with the editor of the collection to assess.

