**Summer School BE180**

**Theme 3, session 2: A Universal Education System for All Ages**

**Introduction**

Some questions participants can consider before the video is played:

What is my current understanding of the institute process?

How have I been engaged with it in my life; what is my experience?

**Video**

**Quotes/study**

**In the pursuit of knowledge, one’s face should be continually turned towards Divine beauty—the beauty of the Word of God, the beauty of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh manifested in human thought and character, the beauty of heavenly attributes reflected in the mirror of the human heart, the beauty of the Faith's standards against which every human attainment is to be measured. The forces of attraction to beauty and thirst for knowledge awakened through spiritual education will aid our children as they grow in steering a fruitful course in life.**

Ruhi Book 12, “Family and the Community”; Unit 2: “An Expanding Conversation on the Education of Children”, Section 8 (page 26)

**Increasingly, participation in institute courses is preparing the friends of God for an ever-deeper engagement in the life of the wider community; it is endowing them with the knowledge, insights, and skills that enable them to contribute not only to the process of developing their own community, but to the progress of society.  In short, the institute is a potent means for the society-building power of the Faith to find release.**

30 December 2021 message from the Universal House of Justice, paragraph 22

**The main sequence of courses is organized so as to set the individual, whether Bahá’í or not, on a path being defined by the accumulating experience of the community in its endeavour to open before humanity the vision of Bahá’u’lláh’s World Order. The very notion of a path is, itself, indicative of the nature and purpose of the courses, for a path invites participation, it beckons to new horizons, it demands effort and movement, it accommodates different paces and strides, it is structured and defined. A path can be experienced and known, not only by one or two but by scores upon scores; it belongs to the community. To walk a path is a concept equally expressive. It requires of the individual volition and choice; it calls for a set of skills and abilities but also elicits certain qualities and attitudes; it necessitates a logical progression but admits, when needed, related lines of exploration; it may seem easy at the outset but becomes more challenging further along. And crucially, one walks the path in the company of others.**

12 December 2011 message from the Universal House of Justiceto All National Spiritual Assemblies

**At the Ruhi Institute, the design and implementation of educational activities are always guided by a profound conviction in the basic nobility of the human being. The Bahá’í Writings state:**

***Man is the Supreme Talisman. Lack of a proper education hath, however, deprived him of that which he doth inherently possess. Through a word proceeding out of the mouth of God he was called into being; by one word more he was guided to recognize the Source of his education; by yet another word his station and destiny were safeguarded. The Great Being saith: Regard man as a mine rich in gems of inestimable value. Education can, alone, cause it to reveal its treasures, and enable mankind to benefit therefrom.***

**Education, then, is not simply seen as the acquisition of knowledge and the development of skills, but also in terms of the development of vast and powerful potentialities inherent in the very nature of every human being. Again, the development of these potentialities and talents, which is considered a God-given right and responsibility of the individual, attains fruition when it is pursued in the spirit of service to humanity and in the context of creating a new world civilization.**

**Each participant in the programs of the Ruhi Institute acts as a student in certain educational activities, and as a tutor in others. The institute, then, uses the term “collaborator” to refer to all who take part in its programs. Based on the conditions and the needs of the population served by the institute, courses are designed along a series of “paths of service” which a collaborator follows according to personal interests and capacities. At the beginning of each path of service collaborators mostly learn and develop new concepts and skills. Later on, they participate in courses that prepare them to act as tutors of the earlier courses, thus creating a unique and dynamic environment for the development of human resources.**

“Conceptual Framework of the Training Institute: Statement of purpose and methods”taken 15 November 2023 from <https://www.ruhi.org/en/statement-of-purpose-and-methods/>

Questions for reflection:

* Having read this, how does it change my understanding of the institute process?
* If the institute process is not simply about acquiring knowledge and skills, what does it contribute to?

**A story**

*Read the account of a seamless educational process based on insights from a case study and explore the questions.*

Picture the trajectory of development for the life of an individual in one of our villages and neighbourhoods as she grows from infancy into adulthood.  From a very early age, community schools help instil spiritual qualities and attitudes, and lay a firm foundation for academic education.  As she turns six, she begins to participate in children’s classes which reinforce her moral abilities with quotations, songs, stories, and games.  At the same time, she enrols in primary school and begins her academic journey.  Towards the end of primary school, at the age of 12 or so, her increased powers of expression and sense of identity find direction in the junior youth program.  Through this series of texts, she learns to see herself as a capable protagonist, able to read and influence the reality in which she lives.  She progresses through junior secondary school in this way, becoming more capable in reading and writing.  Her thirst for academic excellence is heightened and the tutorial and scholarship programs increase her capacity in mathematics and science, an area which is often lacking.  Passing grade 9 and about 15 years of age, she transitions into senior secondary school, and into the main sequence of courses, developing qualities, attitudes, and skills for service that find expression in teaching children’s classes and junior youth groups.  Her academic journey also accelerates as she begins to develop interest in certain subjects, perhaps even considering what her future calling may be.  Her powers of perception are enhanced through the study of several PSA materials, which also increases her capabilities for service.  As she concludes senior secondary, perhaps at the age of 18 or 19, she might dedicate a year or more to service while she considers which career path she may ultimately pursue.  During this intense period, she completes any remaining books of the main institute sequence, furthers her capabilities through more PSA texts, and comes to see herself as a promoter of community wellbeing.  This brief but critical time in life allows her to focus her attention on building capacity in those younger than herself, becoming a very capable animator and tutor.  She may also naturally express this understanding by engaging in social action.  And as she progresses towards the end of her period of intense service, she enrols in tertiary education, in a technical college or a university, and pursues a career path that is consistent with who she has come to know herself to be.  She continues through the higher-level books and enrols in the ISGP program, enhancing her ability to recognize and describe the social forces in society, and better understand how to live a coherent life.

In this way then, one can see how a little child of the age of three today would mature through a community school, children’s class, the junior youth spiritual empowerment program, the main sequence of the training institute, a year of service, PSA modules, higher level institute books, ISGP, as well as support for academic education throughout the entire period, emerging at the age of twenty-seven by the end of the series of Plans as one who has developed qualities, attributes, skills, abilities, insights—spiritual and well as material—that allow her to contribute in a significant way to the ever-greater release of the society building powers inherent in the Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh.

Questions for reflection:

* Now imagine a centre of intense activity with fifty more of her.  How would this impact on the three broad endeavours of expansion and consolidation, social action, and contribution to the prevalent discourses?
* How would this reshape perspectives on the society-building power of the Faith?

**Group Activity—walking a path of service**



With your group, lay out a path of all Ruhi Books (1–14) on the floor (ideally use actual books, otherwise write up the Title of each book on a piece of A4 paper).

Participants walk along this path, articulating what it is they have learned with each text – habits, qualities and skills gained through study and the corresponding actions. Capture answers on a white board or large piece(s) of paper to create an overview of what the courses of the training institute teach us helping us to gain an appreciation of how they build one on the other.

**Personal reflection**