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KARACHI: We have to move forward from theoretical concepts to practical work, said International Conference on Experiential Learning (ICEL) programmes director Dr Yousuf Sharjeel while explaining the main idea of the conference held at the Institute of Business Management (IoBM) on Saturday.

He was addressing the inaugural session of the two-day conference that was attended by entrepreneurs, corporate leaders, heads of multinational companies and front liners from social, health and development sectors. ICEL is divided into three tracks – business management, higher education and early childhood development, said Sharjeel. The conference emphasises on case studies in information technology, engineering, medicine, business and education.

College of Business Management and College of Engineering and Sciences dean Dr Irfan Hyder said that he dreams to practice and promote experiential learning since the last 15 years, ever since he started teaching students who were not motivated. He added that, despite encouraging students through motivational speeches, there were no positive results. Hyder said he realised there is a problem in teaching standards because we have structured teaching processes in our schools, colleges and universities. Hyder believes that the problem can be solved through standardised curriculum and teaching process.

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Sharing his personal experiences, Aman Foundation CEO Malik Ahmad Jalal said that the education system does not give a chance to the students to think and make career options. “I became a chartered accountant just because my uncle was one and he was successful in his life,” he said. “Our younger generation should have the ability to reform and transformation only comes when people have the ability to take even the negative things in life as positive,” he added.

Talking about his research on ‘Student voice and experiential learning’, Jonathan Dameini from Nagoya University of Commerce and Business in Japan said that teachers should know the perspective of their students. In order to promote experience-based learning, one has to understand challenges and problems that students face after graduating and who they consult for suggestions, he said.

Experiential learning is linked with four major parts, said researcher Dr Samra Javed, who works at IoBM entrepreneurship and management excellence centre. These are active experimentation, concrete experience, reflective observation and abstract conceptualisation, she said, referring to her recent research. “There is a dire need of learner centre approach in teaching,” she added.

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