

A Report on Stakeholders' Meeting

April 6, 2018

CIQA, KKHSOU

The meeting was initiated by Dr. Arupjyoti Choudhury, Registrar, KKHSOU by stating that the university hopes for a broad framework of roadmap through brainstorming session under the leadership of Hon'ble Vice Chancellor of the university based on the philosophy of consolidation and reform. With the notion that this meeting will be open to ideas and open to exercise of minds, the Registrar requested for introduction of the members.

Prof. N. N. Sharma, Director, CIQA presented the gist of the theme paper with some additions and stated that the discussion will be more on open learning and confined to key note speech of the International Conference on 'Developmental Interventions and Open Learning for Empowering and Transforming Society'. It was stated that the UGC removed some ambiguities in guidelines on the ODL institutions. The theme paper for the meeting was categorised in four perspectives—increasing GER, goals and objectives of KKHSOU programmes, use of OER by KKHSOU and reducing dropout and improving learner engagement. Giving the reference of Amar Asom, an Assamese daily, he mentioned that the GER of Assam is in pathetic condition. He said that the disparities harm the greater interest of the society. Referring to the Prime Minister's speech on 26th January, 2015, he highlighted the importance of skill based programmes but the hands are tight in case of open universities. For the second perspective, the goals and objectives of an Open University should be economic growth, social inclusion, environmental conservation and sustainable development. Regarding the use of OER and MOOCs, the access, technology, content related aspects were discussed. It was said that the traditional open universities are of industrial model, but the future open universities need to be of connecting model. For reducing dropout and improving learner engagement, it is necessary to identify the learners' need for taking a programme, find out innovative measures to reach the unreached and reverse the access model to 'rural to urban'. Other strategies chalked out from the keynote speech were providing need-based courses for livelihood. With a request for focussed discussion, he presented the agenda for the Brainstorming Session.

In the first round of discussion, senior academicians, Members of Board of Management and Academic Council like Prof. Dinesh Baroowa, Prof. Niru Hazarika and Prof. Rabin Goswami presented their views. Prof. Dinesh Baroowa highlighted the importance of reaching learners in remote areas like *Char* areas of Assam, covering all the jails in Assam, giving recognition to people working the field of education for the deprived section and making them ambassador of the university and taking opportunities from the Commonwealth of Learning. He emphasized that efforts should be made towards creating good human beings along with skill development and increasing GER and avoiding politicization of the students. Prof. Niru Hazarika stated the

importance of understanding the concepts of transformation, intervention and reforms clearly and identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the university for well-conceived initiatives. She suggested for utilizing ICT for accessing rural areas, motivating learners for thinking and learning, collaborating with institutes like IIE following the public-private partnership model. Prof. Robin Goswami stressed the importance of quality of Self Learning Material in Open University and pointed out various dimensions of it to be taken care of, like language, Indian context of the contents, level of learners, ban of copying from reference books, etc.

A SLM writer, Mr. Sajid Ahmed from Assam Institute of Management raised the question of acceptability of degrees provided by Open Universities in relation to traditional Universities to which, Prof. Dinesh Baroowa replied that it depends upon the credibility of the open universities. Dr. Guru Prasad Khataniar, Academic Registrar, Gauhati University indicated towards the opportunities of KKHSOU for expanding education in Assam and suggested for blended MOOCs, developing Multi-Media Centre and utilizing funds from agencies like UGC.

Prof. Daisy Bora Talukdar, Department of Education, Dibrugarh University highlighted the need of SWOT analysis for the university. She suggested for department-wise identification of prospects, training of SLM writers and content-editors and academic audit.

Some of the learners present in the meeting raised the issues of presentation of SLM in lucid manner, placement after taking any programme, raising awareness in schools about KKHSOU, establishing presence of the university through community services, early announcement of results and the question of acceptability of the degree provided by open universities.

Dr. Homeswar Kalita, Principal, Gauhati Commerce College said that all the stakeholders should be responsible for maintaining the quality of open education. He also suggested for follow-up of the learners. The co-ordinator of the KKHSOU Study Centre, Gauhati Commerce College, Dr. Purna Bhattacharya praised the quality of SLM of Assamese Programmes and pointed towards the need of reforms in examination. Another co-ordinator of a study centre suggested for involving the Counsellors in the SLM preparation process. An SLM writer suggested for co-ordination between the Unit writers. Another SLM writer raised the question of recognition of writing SLM in API scores to which the Registrar of the university replied that the SLMs of PG courses have been marked with ISBN which is recognised in API scores.

A research scholar from the Department of MBA, KKHSOU suggested for programmes on Entrepreneurship and collection of grievances of the learners by the Centre-Co-ordinator. An alumnus of the university suggested for providing degrees in dual mode, paying attention to Gross Employment Ratio, organizing workshops for the counsellors and providing the learners opportunities for reflection while writing the SLMs. Another alumnus requested for uniformity in strictness of examination in all the examination centres.

Prof. Aniruddha Deka suggested for diversified and innovative programmes, agriculture related programmes and collaboration with other universities. He emphasized on the importance of making the presence of the university felt by the people.

Dr. Bhabaranjan Sarma, Controller of Examination, KKHSOU delivered some views from examination perspective. He highlighted the place of quality education and ODL in SDGs. He informed that various measures are being taken for examination reforms. He replied to the issue of late declaration of result as because of late receipt of assignment marks for which appropriate measures are being taken.

Dr. Dibyajyoti Mahanta, Dean, Study Centres, KKHSOU presented the general statistics of open universities and indicated that the GER is increasing. He stressed on the improvement of quality of Study-Centres through induction programmes, regularization of counselling classes and organization of workshops for the counsellors. He also suggested for engagement of renowned educationists for motivational lectures, participation of learners and office bearers in co-curricular activities of KKHSOU, submission of counsellors' list to the university and placing of Notice boards in Study Centres.

Prof. Abu Naser Sayed Ahmed, Director, BKRI indicated towards the vast role that open universities can play in the society for empowerment, employment, conservation, etc. He cited the examples of research initiatives in the institutions of Bangladesh. He also pointed towards the importance of reading.

Dr. Hitesh Deka, Hon'ble Vice-Chancellor of KKHSOU stated the mandate of the university to be a social institution and not only an academic institution.

At the end, the summary and conclusion of the discussion was placed by Prof. N. N. Sarma highlighting the importance of internal strengthening for quality improvement of the university. The meeting closed with vote of thanks to all the stakeholders.
