

Draft Proceeding
Regional Consultation Meeting, Fakir Mohan University
28 October 2009

The 5th Regional Consultation meeting was conducted jointly by FM University and North Orissa University. Prof. Sukanti Priya Pattnaik, Vice Chancellor of F M University and Prof. SP Rath, Vice Chancellor of North Orissa University welcomed one and all to the consultative meeting.

Notable among the guests present during the consultation were Hon. Minister of Higher Education Mr. Debipasad Mishra, Mr Madhusudan Padhi, Commissioner-cum-Secretary, Higher Education Dept., Mr. Sudarshan Jena, local MLA, Mr GC Das (Chairman, Zilla Parishad), Mr. Pratap Sarangi, (MLA, Nilgiri) and Mr. Ananta Das, former MLA, Bhograi).

The Honourable Minister drew everyone's attention to the state's Gross Enrolment Ratio in higher education and called for expansion of higher education and creating best possible infrastructural facilities to provide more access to eligible target population. Mr Mishra pronounced the significance of taking regional ground realities into account while suggesting reform measures for higher education in the state. He also emphasized on preserving and promoting creative and conventional disciplines of higher education. Linking higher education with the GDP of the state, the Minister pleaded for suggestions from the participants to turn the disadvantages into advantages and bridge the gap with available resources.

Mr MS Padhi, IAS, Commissioner-cum-Secretary, Higher Education gave a brief account of the *what, why and how* about the task force and appreciated the wider consultation to gain inputs from various sections for planned and inclusive growth. Stating that India is lagging behind most sans few African and South Asian countries, Mr Padhi recognized expansion as one of the major challenges and excellence (in terms of quality of teachers, students, curriculum, life skill based education) being the only key to a better future. Mr Padhi signed off asking the participants to flag issues that need urgent attention and possible solutions for arresting those.

Mr Anant Das called for isolating school and college/university education after careful understanding of reality. However, Mr Das felt that there should be downward integration of Higher education with secondary and school education. Prof. Sanatan Mohanty raised his eyebrows on the erratic system of affiliation, irregular faculty recruitment and offered his valuable suggestions like: attracting young talents to teaching, integrating higher education with the feeders (higher secondary and secondary education). Keeping global standard and needs at the backdrop, Prof. Mohanty suggested having more institutes of National importance and providing demand driven education to meet the need of the hour.

Prof. Sailendra Mohapatra (Retd. Principal, Bhadrak College) was of opinion that recruitment of guest faculties should be done away with and there should be a uniform promotion and transfer policy to protect and retain the best talents

Prof. Deepak Sarangi reiterated Mr Padhi's call for excellence as the only answer to squeeze the room for mediocrity. Prof Sarangi felt that abolition of teaching positions in the name of '*financial crunch situation*' was only a step backward. Rationalization of pay-scale, linking educational institutes with society and community, revamping the current examination system were other suggestions that he offered.

Suggestions such as technology enabled teaching, increasing fee for higher education to improve quality, having cultural exchange programmes came from Dr. Bhagirathi Nayak and Maj. (Dr.) Abhaya Kumar Panda. Mr. Pratap Sarangi (MLA Nilgiri) expressed his concern over the low level of confidence among the students and felt that quality higher education should help in getting rid of this situation. Speaking in Sanskrit, Mr Sarangi pleaded for reviving Sanskrit as an academic discipline and exploring employable areas of Sanskrit language.

Mr Girish Chandra Jena (Chairman, Zilla Parishad) invited everyone's attention to the regional needs such as fishery, forestry and asked for due focus on skill based education in those areas followed by Prof. Jagannath Lenka's suggestion of having at least one centre of excellence in each district of the state. Prof. N Mishra ventilated his views on keeping the selection process free from external interference and providing seed fund for research activities to attract young talent to teaching profession. Dr Debi Prasad Mishra suggested to give emphasis on research and consulting activities and designing curriculum keeping the need of the society and industry in view.

Among others, Prof Prahallad Mohanty suggested that teaching should force the students 'to think' and not just to pass examinations. Having interactive classrooms, bringing back tutorial system, upgrading research facilities in universities and colleges, having a board of experts to monitor courses and syllabi, etc were among other suggestions that came from Prof. Mohanty's desk.

The day long consultation surfaced many other valuable action points which included:

- Teaching aptitude test while recruiting teachers
- Emphasis on skill-oriented and value based higher education
- Prime time management (striking balance between teaching and other academic activities)
- Special focus on tribal studies, mines and environment related programmes in North Orissa
- Mainstreaming of physical education
- Encouraging research in conventional disciplines
- Provision of academic leave for teachers who wish to go for advance level courses and collaborative research
- Follow up action after granting accreditation to new institutes

Prof. LN Mishra and Dr Bhagwan Prakash, representing the task force in the regional consultation brought down the curtains after recapping the action points and summing up the discussions held during the day.

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