

**Draft Proceeding**  
**Regional Consultation Meeting, Berhampur University,**  
**24 October 2009**

The third regional consultation was held in Berhampur on 24 October 2009. Welcoming the chief guest and other participants the Vice Chancellor Prof. B K Sahu gave a brief background of the task force and the urgency of preparing the perspective plan and vision document for higher education in the state. Prof. Sahu maintained that education in general and higher education in particular is the single most important factor for the development of the nation and emphasized on expansion, excellence and inclusion as corner-stones of higher education. Prof Sahu went on to identify certain challenges (expansion, modernization of the system, curriculum to encompass modern demands, industry-community interface, global competitiveness) and offered some possible solutions such as: existing universities to shoulder more responsibilities, focused vision, skill-based education, advanced research and extension activities, etc.

The Chairman of the task force- Padmabhusan Prof. Trilochan Pradhan appreciated the state Government's initiative and solicited honest and frank suggestions from the participants of the workshop. Recognizing that market forces are calling the shots and too much emphasis being given to technical and professional education, Prof. Pradhan urged to reap the benefit in a balanced manner and to give due importance to general/conventional disciplines. He saw this task force as a great opportunity to revive things. Inviting suggestions from the day-long workshop, Prof. Pradhan offered his personal views as some cues for the subsequent deliberations. His views included: having 5 yr integrated courses at under-graduate level, more universities in the State, setting up of Elite model universities ( in the line of some of the universities from the USA), setting up of unitary universities ( and cutting down the no of affiliating universities), constituting Special Agricultural Zones (in partnership with private players), backward integration with schools and junior colleges (feeding the universities), having colleges of Social Sciences and Social Work (job fetching ones), more medical colleges, para-medical colleges, nursing schools, etc, more research and development activities, having an R&D wing at every university and pumping in more money into research. Since 2020 is at quite some distance now, Prof Pradhan urged for an ambitious vision to improve higher education.

Mr Rao. Spcl Secy, Dept of Higher Education appealed to the participants to put together different inputs from various agro-climatic zones that the state is a host to. He also maintained, "Let us not get overwhelmed by the phenomenon of Globalization. It is as old as the multi-cultural ethos of our JAGANNATH culture (lord of the globe)". Mr. Rao felt strongly about the need for improvement of standard of education to match (if not exceed) the global standard. We have constraints (finance, Infrastructure, etc). But within all these we must frame our vision. Let's THINK big and pioneer things that we could be proud of seeing others taking a leaf or two from our vision.

Prof. N C Sahu of Berhampur University presented the vision document that the University think tank had prepared for the workshop. He was of opinion that importance of higher education had not been as badly felt as it is now. He maintained that Gross Enrolment Ratio & technological achievement were highly correlated and expressed his concern over producing unemployable graduates. Prof Sahu took a note of the existing problems that the colleges and universities are facing and offered his suggestions like: having parity among universities, faculty recruitment through State Educational Service, Quality-linked Incentives to knowledge workers, academic allowance, centralizing admission process, creating study-conducive atmosphere (depoliticizing educational campuses), State level Eligibility Test (SLET), administrative autonomy to universities,

creating an Educational Tribunal, setting up Community Colleges ( to suit to the local needs at a low cost) and inter-level linkage (with the feeder ).

Dr S N Rath, Sr. Advocate also expressed his concern over the alarming growth of unemployable graduates in the state and called for a drastic step to turn things around. Dr Amaresh Mishra and Prof Sahu of Berhampur University called for depolicizing the educational campuses across the state and also the process of recruitment. Prof Sahu pointed out the callousness of Regulatory and Accreditation Authorities and asked if the process could be redefined.

Prof. PSN Patra, Retd Prof. of Govt. College, Berhampur emphasized on planning for future keeping in mind the present needs at immediate and utmost priority. His suggestion of appointing people with profound academic credibility as advisors was appreciated by many.

Prof. Patra suggested that institutional variations must be kept to the minimum extent possible and liaisoning with leading specialized institutes for curriculum, training, research, sharing of knowledge should be in place. He also opined that the plan needed to be linked with the larger goal of promotion of socio-economic development and poverty alleviation.

Dr Pradeep Panigrahi, Honourable MLA, Gopalpur called for a well thought out mechanism to integrate the local, national and international ambits of education and expressed his conviction that that education must provide food, health and wealth”

In the second session, Prof. Amiya Pattnaik (Retd. Prof. of History) gave his inputs which included: boosting infrastructure in rural Orissa, one good college in each district (for instance- of Ravenshaw standard) or of equal status, having extension centres of leading universities/colleges, timely and continuous recruitment, ensuring handholding of young teachers by the experienced ones and giving more autonomy to the teachers. Prof. L N Mishra, former VC, Utkal University who is a member of the task force expressed his concern over the popular misconception over the formation and importance of the task force. He insisted on introspection, self-assessment and self-motivation to deliver the intended goals.

Among other suggestions that emerged out of the discussions, some notable ones are:

- Special incentives to the poor students to attract them to HE to ensure equity
- Super specialized courses aiming at producing employable graduates
- Video conferencing/e-learning to create virtual classrooms
- Proper student-teacher ratio
- State open University (accessibility, adoptability, availability)
- Giving counselling to students and explaining them about the courses and programmes to choose
- More autonomy to principals of the affiliating colleges
- Exam system has to be revisited
- Putting a check on teacher’s absenteeism
- Students feedback system
- Refreshers courses, cultural exchange programme
- Proper attention to conventional disciplines
- Built in programmes for on-job, in-job, refreshers training.

Mr AK Ray, Registrar of Berhampur University presented the vote of thanks and it draw curtains on the day long consultation.