

IGNOU Koraput Study Centre at COATS: In Quest to educate Tribals

The Council of Analytical Tribal Studies (COATS) is a prestigious institution which is the first of its kind. The centre was established by a voluntary organization which undertakes extensive studies on tribal populace and their problems with the sole objective of supplementing the efforts of the Government in the sphere of socio-economic development. The centre was inaugurated by Late Biju Patnaik, the then Chief Minister of Orissa, on 9th January, 1993. The institution with the objective of spreading the light of knowledge across the tribal region has also joined hands with IGNOU to impart quality education to every individual in the tribal regions of Orissa.



Mr. Gopinath Pradhan, programme study centre coordinator, at IGNOU's Special Study Centre holds the responsibility of administering the centre at COATS, Koraput. Recent developments, as informed by Mr. Pradhan, have been that the centre has activated Sociology and MSW courses. He says that there was a felt need in this tribal district, due to which there is also a huge scope for the individuals who wish to serve the tribal people. In fact, learners also take great initiative to study these programmes. For the betterment of the learners the centre has a small library, which provides almost all the necessary books and study materials required for the learners. The centre also invites guest faculty from other districts to give the learners a holistic view in the subject area.

Mr. Pradhan expressed that "now-a-days the study materials reach the learners on time, whereas, before the decentralisation the problem of undelivered IGNOU materials was an unpleasant predicament for us. But now things have certainly improved due to the initiative of our honourable Vice-Chancellor". While speaking on the content of the study material he said that "it has always been good and the best part is that now the material is also getting translated in our own regional language, Oriya". This decision will certainly help the centre in training and educating the learners in a much easier way. According to Mr. Pradhan, "it will also benefit the learners to a great extent, as it will give them much more freedom to express in their own language. Therefore, it is more valuable to the learners in all respect".



Video-conferencing and Gyan Darshan are the supplementing activities which support the knowledge gained by the learners from this study centre. The learners are kept engaged in the complete process during their counseling sessions in different ways.

Mr. Pradhan holds the view that the usage of ICTs should be more extensive and there should be more available resources at the study centres. Mr. Pradhan says that the learners at the centre often requests for more reference books as the library is falling short of it at the moment. The coordinator also feels that the shortage of counselors is a never ending problem which unveils itself every time a professor or a lecturer is transferred, which is quite a usual phenomenon.

He further says that "Teaching learning method is rarely put to practice because the complete IGNOU module/session is time bound. The learners also come with a mindset that a regular classroom teaching is involved but IGNOU suggests us only counseling or clarification of doubts. As per IGNOU's schedule a counselor has to finish a unit in just two to three hours, which often become a difficult task when learners come as a blank slate". Considering all these hurdles before the centre and its counselors, the study centre is still performing better under such unfavourable conditions. As Mr. Pradhan says, it's due to sheer involvement and support of the Regional Director that they are progressing day by day with better support services and available facilities to the learners. In future, thus, the centre aims at strengthening itself with better infrastructure, more career oriented courses, making the library more resourceful and rich.

By Abhay Anand