

Report of IGNOU Promotional Campaign by the IGNOU Regional Centre Imphal

IGNOU promotional activities over the years in Manipur have been confined to advertisements in the local dailies as and when time for admissions to the various courses approach. The desire to adopt innovative methods to create awareness of IGNOU and its activities was felt and discussed at the RC. On the conception that IGNOU should 'go' to the people rather than people 'coming' to IGNOU, the following approach was adopted and put to test.

The Approach

Student conferences are a regular annual feature in the state among most communities of people, where students, elders and community leaders come together for three to four days to discuss and debate on issues directly or indirectly affecting the students. If only IGNOU could become a partner in these gatherings to make the students/elders aware that:

1. IGNOU certificates are as good as those of other universities.
2. IGNOU is an alternative and not a different system of education.
3. IGNOU is particularly interested in students who could not avail higher education due to various constraints.
4. IGNOU offers various need-based courses and hence is concerned with the welfare of people belonging to different walks of life.
5. IGNOU's ultimate vision is the creation of a resource pool of knowledge that can most effectively come from a system of education where each individual can educate himself/herself in a manner that fits his/her nature/personality and his/her needs.

It was decided that IGNOU would put up stalls during these gatherings where a staff would distribute brochures/leaflets about the university and its activities and also answer queries from potential learners. The person would also record the difficulties faced by those students who are already enrolled with IGNOU. A slot of about 15-30 minutes for the RD/ARD/Coordinator would also be requested for a more meticulous explanation of IGNOU and its objectives.

The Programme

To put to test the above exercise three conferences were selected. The Maram Students Conference in Senapati district, the Paite Students Conference in Churachandpur district and the Kom-Rem Conference in Chandel District. Due to problems relating to communication and logistics the Kom-Rem Conference was withdrawn from the programme and the Anal Students Conference was included.

While official letters were being dispatched for the confirmation of IGNOU's participation to the selected gatherings, two other requests, one from the Mao

Students Union and the other from the Moyon Students Golden Jubilee Committee, came to the RC for showcasing IGNOU in their gatherings. Due to logistical problems the Mao Students Conference could not be included as the conference was scheduled for 28 December 2006. The RC was more than glad to take part in the Moyon Students Golden Jubilee celebration where IGNOU became a major highlight of the programme.

The Maram Students Conference held from 6-9 January 2007 was attended by approximately 1500 students/elders of the community. An IGNOU Information stall was put up with one of our senior students as stall I/C. In the three-day programme, IGNOU was able to distribute 1500 copies of information brochures. The ARD was also given an hour to talk on IGNOU and its activities.

The Anal Students Conference (23-25 January 2007) had about 700 participants. While we had entrusted the Principal of the United College, Chandel (where we will be opening a Study Centre shortly) to speak on behalf of IGNOU, he was unable to do so. One of our B.Ed. students, however, was able to distribute the information brochures and clarify doubts and inform the gathering about the University.

The Moyon Students Golden Jubilee celebration (26-29 January 2007) had the presence of IGNOU felt with the ARD given the chance to speak about the University. The 1000 odd participants also were given the information brochures and a number of questions were answered. The authorities of the place has requested the ARD of the possibility of opening a Centre/Sub Centre in the region.

Due to poor communication, photos of these two gatherings are yet to be received by the RC. However, a few copies were taken from a mobile camera.

The Paite Students Conference saw some 1500 participants. The Coordinator of Study Centre (1702), Churachandpur, Dr. Rosiem Pudaite spoke on the occasion and his staff distributed the brochures. It may be noted that SC 1702 has seen a consistently growing trend of enrolment and it is hoped that this showcasing of IGNOU will create better awareness and motivate many more students to acquire the benefits of the IGNOU educational system.

In these conferences, IGNOU was able to reach out to nearly 5000 potential learners. It is our hope that those who attended the conference and were made to see the activities of the University in a different light will pass on IGNOU's message to others. In fact, it may be said that the presence of IGNOU in these gatherings has had an impact in other places.

Our SC 1706 (Don Bosco College, Maram) requested the RC, if a workshop on IGNOU could be conducted at the Centre. The proposal was instantly approved by the Honourable Vice Chancellor through the Asstt. Director (NEP). The two-day workshop was unique in a sense that it was attended not only by the students but also by members from the Security Forces and of a Task Force of the Border Roads

Organisation stationed in Maram (the venue of the workshop). Altogether 837 participants attended the workshop. The ARD along with the Coordinator and two senior Counsellors of the SC were the main resource persons. The workshop was a major success.

Study Centre 1709, Jiribam Hr. Sec. School, conducted a one-day literacy campaign on 2nd March 2007 at Borobekra High School. The function was graced by Shri Moto Singh, Member, Borobekra Gram Panchayat, Shri Radhamohan Singh, Headmaster, Borobekra High School and Shri P. Chandramohan Singh, Asst. Teacher Borobekra High School. Shri S. Maniton Singh, Principal, Jiribam Hr. Sec. School spoke on “IGNOU as an Answer to Education in Remote

Areas”, Dr. Das spoke on “Dos and Don’ts of HIV” and H. Joykumar Singh (HOD History) Jiri College spoke on “Need-Based Education through IGNOU”. The function saw the attendace of 230 persons, mostly youth. The Coordinator of the Centre Gagarin Singh highlighted IGNOU and its various activities to the participants.

The response from the potential learners to these initiatives has been heartening. Although the above programmes were able to cater to only a small portion of the population, it is evident that the awareness of IGNOU is spreading. Those who attended the programmes are not keeping quiet. It is our hope that apart from the increase in enrolments in the coming years, the ideals and objectives of the University will become more comprehensible to the people in the state. The race has only begun.