

16

INDIRA GANDHI NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF INTERDISCIPLINARY AND TRANSDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

Minutes of the 4th School Board Meeting held on March 04, 2009 at 1.30 a.m in the Board Room, Block No.8, IGNOU, New Delhi -68.

The following were present:

- | | | |
|--|---|----------|
| 1. Prof. V.N. Rajasekharan Pillai, Vice Chancellor, IGNOU | - | Chairman |
| 2. Prof. K.R. Srivathsan, Pro Vice Chancellor in charge of SOITS | - | Member |
| 3. Prof. Vijay Kapur, Professor, FMS, University of Delhi | - | Member |
| 4. Prof. Chandan Mahanta, IIT, Guwahati | - | Member |
| 5. Prof. N.K. Dash, Professor, SOE, IGNOU | - | Member |
| 6. Dr. Jaswant Sokhi, Reader, SOS, IGNOU | - | Member |
| 7. Dr. Nandini Sahu, Reader, SOH, IGNOU | - | Member |

The following members could not attend the meeting:

1. Prof. Dilip R. Ahuja, ISRO Professor, National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bangalore.
2. Prof. D.P. Chattopadhyaya, Chairman, Centre for Studies in Civilisations, Kolkata.
3. Dr. Ranabir Samaddar, Director, Mahanirbhan Calcutta Research Group, Kolkata.
4. Prof. Nawal Kishore, SMS, IGNOU

Prof. Kalpana Mishra, Director (Planning & Development), Shri Pankaj Khanna, Deputy Director (Planning & Development), Prof. D. Gopal (SOSS), Dr. Ajay Mahurkar (SOSS), and Dr. Babu P. Remesh, Reader & Director (IC), SOITS were also present in the meeting as Special Invitees. Ms. Sonal Baxi attended as a Special Invitee to present the proposal of collaboration between IGNOU and Adivasi Academy, Tejgarh for discussions on the launch of courses on tribal and Himalayan studies.

At the outset, Prof. Srivathsan, Pro Vice Chancellor welcomed the members and special invitees. This was followed by item-wise discussions and recommendations of the agenda of school board meeting as follows:

SOITS 4.1. Confirmation of the Minutes of the Third School Board Meeting held on October 15, 2008

SOITS 4.1. 1. No comments received on the Minutes of the Meeting of the Third School Board. The School Board Confirmed the Minutes as approved.

SOITS 4.1. 2. While discussing the agenda item, Prof. Srivathsan suggested that as a matter of discipline, it would be desirable to present an Action Taken Report in the light of the decision taken in the previous school board meeting each time when the board

meets. The members unanimously agreed to this suggestion and the matter was noted for further follow up.

SOITS 4.1.3. Prof. Srivasthan sought a clarification regarding the progress in selection of Research and Training Assistants for the course on Gandhian Studies. Prof. Gopal reported that the work was in progress and explained that the process will be completed shortly.

SOITS 4.2. Review of Status of already approved programmes of the School

SOITS 4.2.1. An update on the status of already approved programmes of the school was provided by Dr. Babu P. Remesh, Director (I/c), SOITS. This was followed by a disaggregated and item-wise discussions and recommendations of the agenda point.

SOITS 4.2.1. IGNOU-SACAR Programmes: The data received from SACAR, Puducherry regarding the enrolment status till February 2009, apropos the six ongoing courses (Certificate Course in Sri Aurobindo Studies; P.G. Diploma in Studies in Indian Culture; P.G. Diploma in Integral Education; and M.A./M.Phil./Ph.D.- in Sri Aurobindo Studies) was reported to the School Board. As per the data, these programmes together have a total enrolment of 47 candidates.

SOITS 4.2.1.1. While discussing the matter Prof. Srivasthan suggested that since the board meeting is also considering a proposal for collaboration between IGNOU and International Centre for Integral Studies (ICIS), New Delhi (SOITS 4.6), there is a need to ensure that we are not duplicating same courses or programmes. It was pointed out that if necessary, both the organisations be brought together in a common forum to discuss the need of designing the new courses without overlapping and with due scope for deriving strength from already existing programmes or reading material. Prof. Chandan Mahanta seconded this suggestion, and told that such an approach will bring in more coherence in the academic courses being offered by the IGNOU on similar subjects (e.g. integral studies). The board members unanimously agreed to this suggestion and recommended that representatives of both the organizations can be brought together in a common consultative forum in which the details of the new courses is discussed.

SOITS 4.2.2. P.G. Diploma in Folklore and Cultural Studies: Dr. Nandini Sahu, Programme Coordinator explained the details and progress in the preparation of the course material for the programme. It was pointed out that subsequent to the course writers meeting in March 2008, the material preparation was progressing. Currently the course material is almost ready for sending to the press and the course is expected to be ready for the July 2009 session. A brochure of the programme was circulated to the board members for comments and suggestions.

SOITS 4.2.2.1. The board members expressed their overall satisfaction over the progress made so far. It was suggested that a clear mention in the brochure apropos the minimum academic requirement (i.e. graduation in any discipline) will help the prospective candidates to opt for the course. Prof. Srivasthan suggested that the Programme

Coordinator look into the possibility of online support for the programme to augment the learners and encourage community participation in knowledge sharing. The members also suggested that given the cultural diversity of India there could be optional modules prepared in the course that allow the candidate to opt at least one module related to local folklore.

SOITS 4.2.2.2. In response to a clarification of Prof. Dash regarding the envisaged delivery mechanisms of the course, the Programme Coordinator explained that initially it is proposed to offer the course through three regional centres – Delhi, North East and Kochi. While discussing this matter, the members highlighted the need for expanding the scope and the desirability of exploring involvement of regional folklore academies and specialized centres in folklore and cultural studies as partners in offering the programme. Prof. Kalpana Mishra suggested that it is desirable to provide an option for the students to do their project work with one of the identified and approved regional centres so that the quality of course work will naturally enhance, with greater scope and flexibility for incorporating indigenous and localized information systems. In the light of these suggestions the members suggested that the Programme Coordinator should prepare a draft list of regional institutions / resource centres that could be associated for the delivery of the course.

SOITS 4.2.2.3. Prof. Vijay Kapur explained that while allowing flexibility for the candidates to work on localized subjects the course should also retain certain degree of rigidity especially in terms of realizing its pedagogical goals. This could be achieved through preparation of quality and standardized course work for all students taking the course with the choice of taking up project work in local folklore with the associated Regional Centre. Prof. Kapur also explained that it would be desirable to plan in terms of possible catchment areas and target groups for the course, so that the dissemination of the course will be more effective. The desirability of linking the course to major national level campaigns (e.g. incredible India) was also highlighted by the member. In the discussion, Dr. Ajay Mahurkar highlighted the need for defining pedagogical goals, which essentially enhances the efficacy of the course.

SOITS 4.2.3. Integrated Ph D. in Physics and Astrophysics in Collaboration with IAP:

SOITS 4.2.3.1. The progress of the Integrated Ph.D. in Physics and Astrophysics in Collaboration with IAP as received from Dr. C.K. Ghosh, SSC and Programme Coordinator was presented by the Director (I/C) of SOITS.

SOITS 4.3 -4.5 Phase wise reporting of various courses/programmes on Gandhi and Peace Studies

SOITS 4.3-5.1. Prof. D. Gopal provided a detailed update on matters related to agenda items SOITS 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5. In his presentation, Prof. Gopal provided a phase wise reporting of various programmes related to the IGNOU courses/programmes on Gandhi

(B)

and Peace studies and tabled specific proposals on each of the programmes. These include: (a) the proposal to consider Phase 2 (Programme Concept Form) of Post Graduate Certificate in Gandhi and Peace Studies, Post Graduate Diploma in Gandhian Studies, and M.A. in Gandhi and Peace Studies; (b) the proposal to consider Phase 3 (Programme Design and Detailed Programme Report) of Post Graduate Certificate in Gandhi and Peace Studies, Post Graduate Diploma in Gandhian Studies, and M.A. in Gandhi and Peace Studies; and (c) the proposal to consider Phase 1 (Programme Proposal) of M.Phil and Ph D. Programmes (in Gandhian Studies and Peace).

SOITS 4.3-5.2. It was reported to the School Board that the next course writers' meeting on Gandhi and Peace Studies will be conducted in GSDS and IGNOU during 13-15 March 2009 and the certificate programme is planned to be launched by January 2010. The members unanimously appreciated the progress made so far and suggested the Programme Coordinator to go ahead with the proposed time frames, deadlines and plan of action.

SOITS 4.3-5.3. Prof. Srivathsan highlighted that while recruiting the RTAs for the programme, it is desirable to expand the scope of target groups by allowing the participation of aspirants from diverse academic streams, especially in view of the wide ranging scope and adaptability of Gandhian values. It was suggested that the applicants might be invited to attend a Workshop and their performance in that workshop could be taken as input for their selection as RTAs.

SOITS 4.3-5.4. Prof. Vijay Kapur and Prof. Chandan Mohanta, while supporting the above suggestion, suggested that efforts be taken to enhance the interdisciplinary prospects of these courses by expanding the scope of these courses to areas such as environmental studies, sustainable development, disaster management and so on. The members opined that such expansion of coverage will inter alia enhance the job prospects as well as the acceptability of the course by larger segments of the community.

SOITS 4.3-5.5. The members suggested that the Programme Coordinator involve suitable persons with localized specialization on the subject to enhance the content and quality of the course material.

SOITS 4.6. Proposal for Collaboration between IGNOU and ICIS

SOITS 4.6.1. The details of a proposal for collaboration between IGNOU and International Centre for Integral Studies (ICIS) was reported by the Director (I/C) of SOITS. While responding to this Prof. Srivathsan reiterated his concerns expressed before (SOITS 4.2.1.1.) on the need to ensure that duplication in subject matter in the programs of different organizations are avoided. It was suggested that both the organizations be brought together in a common forum to discuss and ensure that the new courses are as complementary as possible with due scope for deriving strength from already existing programmes and study materials. Supplementing this point, Prof. Dash and Prof. Sokhi added that as a precautionary and preventive exercise we avoid possible overlapping of contents in the newly proposed courses. The members unanimously

(12)

opined that the new courses to be agreed upon with ICIS needs to be distinct from the existing IGNOU-SACAR courses, while there is potential scope for adequately utilising the existing course material in the new courses also. There is the possibility of one course to derive strength from the other. In view of the above, the members strongly recommended for setting up a single steering committee for all courses on Sri Aurobindo and Integral Studies – which includes representatives from both SACAR and ICIS. With these suggestions, the members agreed that SOITS can proceed with the proposed collaboration with ICIS.

SOITS 4.7. To consider programmes related to Tribal Studies and Himalayan Studies with Adivasi Academy, Tejgarh, Gujarat

SOITS 4.7.1. Ms. Sonal Baxi, representative of Adivasi Academy in Tejgarh provided a brief profile of activities of the Academy and subsequently presented the gist of the proposal of the Academy to offer four courses on Tribal and Himalayan Studies through IGNOU.

SOITS 4.7.2. Chairman pointed out that the Academy already has done commendable work in preservation of adivasi information systems and has a good track record as an institution in tribal and Himalayan studies. In view of this, the Board agreed to consider the Academy as a recognized research centre of IGNOU and also offer specialized courses of IGNOU through its Open and Distance Learning framework. Chairman added that given the diversity in tribal cultures, we should not homogenize the study contents and approach to the subject. Rather, the attempt should be to provide our capabilities as a tool to preserve their innate information base and objectives.

SOITS 4.7.3. While agreeing to the proposal, Prof. Srivathsan explained that there is scope for amplifying the content and output of the course in modern platform (for instance, multimedia). Accordingly, it was suggested to devise an open portal managed by the tribals themselves. He further provided examples of successful cases of local level participation in knowledge management involving the use of modern techniques by the indigenous communities.

SOITS 4.7.4. Prof. Vijay Kapur suggested that in the study material of the proposed courses it is desirable to include a module on entrepreneurship, livelihood opportunities and survival skills.

SOITS 4.7.5. Prof. Chandan Mahanta opined that rather than interfering into the tribal and indigenous cultures, the technology to be engaged in the courses needs to be used as a tool which helps preserving the localized wisdom and way of life of tribal communities.

(14)

SOITS 4.7.6. Dr. Ajay Mahurkar suggested that the pedagogical objectives of the courses need to be clearly spelt out and academic rigor should be ensured, apart from the curiosity learning part.

SOITS 4.7.7. In the light of the above discussion and suggestions, the members unanimously agreed that the necessary approval for the proposed courses be accorded and the Adivasi Academy be recognized as an Autonomous institution to offer the courses through IGNOU, *and to take up much as an approved research centre off the UAN.*

SOITS 4.8. To consider a Certificate Programme in Sanskrit in Collaboration with Chinmaya International Foundation (CIF)

SOITS 4.8.1. The proposal from Chinmaya International Foundation (CIF) to consider a Collaborative Certificate Programme in Sanskrit between IGNOU and CIF was discussed. Prof. Srivathsan (PVC) the members and Chairman apropos the earlier visit of representatives of CIF in this regards. After detailed deliberation, the board members unanimously recommended that necessary follow up be undertaken to proceed with the proposed collaboration.

SOITS 4.8.2. Prof. Srivathsan suggested that a Joint Consultative Committee of the programme should also explore the possibility of effectively incorporating multimedia content in the course material.

SOITS 4.8.3. Chairman suggested that in view of the unanimous approval of the board members, the SOITS should proceed with the preparation and signing of the MoU with CIF. This could be done on 12 March afternoon as indicated by the CIF.

SOITS 4.9. The proposal to establish Virtual University for Applied Gandhian Values

SOITS 4.9.1. Prof. Srivathsan explained the proposal to commence a Virtual University for Applied Gandhian Values in association with the Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti (GSDS). It was explained that the Virtual University will adequately blend and utilize the capabilities of both IGNOU and GSDS to set up an international and online centre for Applied Gandhian Values, by providing a stable governance system and scope for adequate user interface.

SOITS 4.9.2. The members unanimously agreed to this proposal and recommended for necessary follow up action.

SOITS. 4.10. Other Items, with the permission of Chair

SOITS 4.10.1. In response to a query of the Chairman apropos the proposed independent activities of the SOITS and the individual contribution of the newly joined faculty member (in addition to the existing collaborative and ongoing activities), Dr. Babu P.

(10)

Remesh, Reader and Director (I/C) provided a brief outline of future course of action. The board noted that SOITS had ample scope for expansion as a vibrant research centre and common platform for blending research efforts and educational pursuits of various disciplines and organizations. The School has the potential to develop as a place that nurtures active collaboration between various schools within the IGNOU system and with relevant external institutions/organizations in its interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary programs. In view of this, and taking into consideration that the school is in its formative stage, the board suggested that a concept paper be prepared to provide a broad framework and pointers to the future course action. This framework should also outline the possible areas to be taken up by the school in the next few years and thereby establish itself as a reputed centre of interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary studies. The following some of the possible areas for expansion of the schools activities were suggested.

- (a) Developing Integrated M.Phil/Ph.D Programme on Interdisciplinary Research (which provides the candidates ample opportunities for understanding and internalizing the concept of interdisciplinary research from the view points of diverse disciplines and schools of thought)
- (b) Organising regular seminar series that provides a scope for inviting and listening to renowned experts who are well versed with interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research techniques (from both within and outside IGNOU). This will also give an active forum for exchange of dialogue in the academic community of the university.
- (c) Initiating a journal on Interdisciplinary and Transdisciplinary Studies – which allows the internal faculty of IGNOU as well as outside experts to place their non-conventional research experience for further informed debates.

Dr. Remesh stated that at his individual level, he will be working on an advanced level course focusing on labour and development.

SOITS 4.10.2. The members unanimously agreed to the suggestions above and opined that such a broader outline will lead to greater clarity in the activities of the school, apart from providing a blue print for further expansion.

SOITS 4.10.3. Chairman while approving the proposal told that a concept paper may be prepared and submitted for formal approval suggested that if required the SOITS can organize a National Level Brainstorming Workshop to solicit the views of experts apropos the scope and potential of developing the School as a premier centre for interdisciplinary studies. Similar exercises should be done in the case of developing the course on labour studies. He further suggested that alongside the organization of seminar series, the SOITS should also prepare and publish research papers. It was pointed out that the school accommodate a range of subjects and topics such as sustainable development, conflict management, legal education and so on.

SOITS 4.10.4. While agreeing to the proposals of future course of action, Prof. Srivathsan pointed out that the proposed journal be made as open access publication on the Internet to ensure wider dissemination and active participation of potential beneficiaries.

The meeting ended with a vote of thanks to the Chair.

V.N. Rajasekharan Pillai
(V.N. Rajasekharan Pillai)
Chairman

*Approved
with
the change
on p. 6.*