

Report on A One Day Awareness Workshop for Study Centre Functionaries on Sensitizing Transgender issues

Genesis

The Judgment given by the Supreme Court of India in 2014 states that Transgender (TG) community is to be given equal representation in Higher education and job opportunities. In order to bring the TG community in the fold of inclusive Higher Education, RC Delhi 1 has taken a number of proactive measures in meeting with NGOs working for TG communities and organizing awareness workshop to all stakeholder of Higher Education and other likeminded agencies.

As IGNOU is committed to inclusive Higher Education through Distance mode for all sections of the society, inclusiveness tends to be more broadened with increased access to education for marginalized and deprived sections including the Transgender groups. In this respect, RC Delhi-1 had organized its first awareness Workshop to sensitize the Transgender community on 24th March, 2017. Further, since admission is in progress, many transgender groups have been approaching the Regional Centre to get them enrolled under TG category. Hence, the Humsafar Trust (NGO) had approached RC to admit nearly 30 TG aspirants in various IGNOU Academic Programs. To further, sensitize the TG aspirants, Academic Counsellors and SC functionaries of select LSCs, it was proposed to organize a one day admission promotional workshop for TGs **on 28th June, 2017 at RC Delhi I.**

The objective of the Workshop was to give possible opportunities to talented and eligible TG aspirants to receive quality Distance education that is suitable to their needs. This will facilitate IGNOU to build more understanding and consensus on issues pertaining to TG community at RC and LSCs.

In this respect, to have a better understanding on trans-community identities and other key issues, three resource persons from the Humsafar Trust besides, 10 Coordinators/PICs/Counsellors from LSCs were invited to this workshop. A brief report of the same is hereby furnished along with some select photographs.

Methodology

The Workshop was jointly organized with Mumbai based the Humsafar Trust (NGO) working on health and rights of sexual minorities in India since 2004. The Workshop mainly adopted the methodology of sharing experiences of TG in educational sector and followed by group discussion. Besides, Dr. Hemadri Roy from School of Gender and Development Studies also shared and highlighted the gender sensitivities through interaction with various stakeholders.

At the outset, Dr. A. Varadarajan, Deputy Director, RC Delhi 1 welcomed the participants and Dr. Jayashree Kurup DD outlined the need for conducting the workshop and its broad objectives. Further, Dr. D.B. Damle, DD deliberated upon the changing needs of students counseling services in view of the recent UGC directives according to which it has now become mandatory for all higher educational institutions to bring the transgenders into the fold of higher education.

The technical sessions were handled by Ms. Sowmya and Yashwinder Singh, Programme Manager, the Humsafar Trust. In her first technical session, she highlighted the fundamentals of human sex quality including biological sex, gender identity, sexual orientation and social role. Soon after, a short film on transgender was screened to sensitize the unique identities of transgenders and their issues pertaining to health. In the post-lunch technical session, she highlighted the transgenders' rights, diversity and inclusion related issues. It was widely discussed and interacted with all participants. Dr. Himadri Roy from SOGDS, IGNOU, has also immensely contributed to gender identity issues in understanding their specific needs in the educational institutions. Many participants raised the issue of the difference between gay population and transgenders. It was clarified by the resource persons by streaming a short film on biological sex and gender identities.

In the concluding remarks, Dr. Hemadri Roy, SOGDS, IGNOU emphasized the need of close collaboration with Regional Centre and LSCs in delivering support services to TG community learners.

Outcome

This workshop has enhanced the understanding on trans community identities, key issues of the community and educational specific issues. It has also helped to equip the staff at RC and study centre functionaries to deal and address specific issues resulting in encouragement to TG community to avail higher educational facilities through distance mode. Keeping in view their financial constraints and isolation from their family and nativity, it was unanimously decided to urge the University for Fee Exemption in all academic programs for TG community.



