

Proceedings of the Internal Workshop of the COS Project held in Utkal University, Bhubaneswar on 19th and 20th February, 2005

Proceedings of 1st Day, dated 19/02/2005

At the beginning of the workshop, Prof. Asha Hans requested Dr. S.K. Patnaik, Head of the Department, Political Science to preside over the inaugural session. Prof. F.M. Sahoo, Head of the Department, Psychology, gave the welcome address. Prof. Sahoo introduced the guests to the participants of the workshop and also emphasized the role of European Commission in facilitating interaction among the Professionals, Specialists and Academicians with general population of the society with a view to provide service and support to the disabled.

At the beginning, Prof. Evemarie Knust-Potter of Dortmund University presented her report on the project. First, she expressed her satisfaction that Utkal University has arranged such a workshop. During her presentation, she emphasized about the requirement of knowledge on disability and meaningful interaction among the partners of the COS Project. She also mentioned about an International seminar held in Oxford in 1999 with about 1,000 delegates from all over the world which also included some delegates from Orissa. She had a chance to interact with some delegates from Orissa and discuss with them. That discussion was the foundation for inclusion of Orissa under the COS Project. She pointed out that this is the right opportunity at the right time to formalize our information network for the benefit of the disabled. She stressed the need for a structural partnership between the academicians and disabled persons with a common objective. Inter cultural knowledge, and exchange of practical knowledge and academic training is the important component in this project.

She also emphasized the role of social communication and talked about different sets of social communication and social interaction. Since interaction with the disabled persons is difficult, Prof. Evemarie Knust-Potter suggested that, we should learn the individual's culture and language to work with them. She also suggested for the development of training modules to interact with persons with autism. About COS, Prof. Evemarie Knust-Potter said that its aim is working towards building an inclusive community. COS represented a group of people who provide support to vulnerable people. She talked about empowering the disabled as well as assisting the circle members in doing so.

Prof. Joe Whittaker of Bolton Institute presented his report on local activities. He emphasized the sense of belongingness that is available in India at all time unlike U.K. which he is experiencing. He also laid the stress on the change from exclusion to inclusion. Dr. Navin Kikabhai shared his experience with other partners and presented the report. Prof. Asha Hans participated in the discussion with introduction of some new invitees to the participants. She expressed with strong conviction that this project is very important and useful to the whole of the society, as this project will overcome the limitations that are put

on academics and it will reach to the people and will bring a radical change.

On behalf of NYASADRI, Mrs. Sabita Swain presented a report of case study as per the project in Gondia Block of Dhenkanal district in the State of Orissa in which they have studied the disabled coming under polio, paraplegia, blind, deaf, dumb, and mentally retarded covering 103 samples under 33 villages. The data were collected with the method of personal interaction, semi-structured questionnaire, observation of social climate. The main areas of their findings are : (i) socio-economic condition of the family, (ii) feeling of disables towards disabled, (iii) attitude of the society towards the disabled, (iv) consultation for treatment, (v) problems of aids and appliances, (vi) receipt of disability certificate etc. NYASADRI also presented a report on its future course of action through normative stage of selected cases, awareness programme about schemes and programmes, publication of analytical report etc.

Dr. Navin Kikabhai of Bolton Institute presented their report with example of telephone survey conducted in August, 2004, in the North side of U.K. He emphasized the individual's experience for the support and discussed about the issues involved with the disabled such as the attitude of disabled, identity, struggle for acceptance survival and love, and viewed social support as a trap i.e. the fear of being segregated from others if they approached formal support system, finding support from people they can trust. Prof. Joe Whittaker emphasized that while dealing with people we should recognize and value any difference if at all it exists. It has to be a two-way process. He also stressed on meaningful support.

The Second session of the first day workshop on 19/2/2005 started with Prof. Asha Hans in the chair. Prof. Sudhakar Rath presented the action plan of Utkal University with disagreeing the term "disabled" and preferring the term "differently able". He elaborated the report dividing it into two parts: (i) university based curriculum on disability, (ii) workshops, seminars and field components.

He described the complete course structure of the two proposed studies such as P.G. Diploma in disability studies in the Department of Psychology and certificate course in disability and public policy in the Department of Political Science and introduction of disability units in the syllabus of other Departments. As per his description, the P.G. Diploma course will be 6 months carrying 100 marks with two semesters. The certificate course will be of 90 days with 250 marks. He also explained the third component of his action plan that is the field testing of such modules with the help of NGOs especially with open learning system. Explaining the different questions put forth by the participants regarding the future of the proposed course he said that these disabled study is now being given more importance by UGC and planning commission.

Prof. Asha Hans supplemented Prof. S. Rath by adding that it is necessary to take the stigma, out of people's mind, relating to disability.

To this Mr. Joe Whittaker said that people should be identified by their names and not by their ability. Prof. N.C. Pati emphasized on providing vocational education to disabled people to make them independent. Prof. Evemarie Knust-Potter talked about the samples i.e. characteristics of focus persons. She also emphasized on professionalism.

Prof. F.M. Sahoo shed light on some of the limitations of various support zones while Prof. N.C. Pati drew attention towards the importance of attitude, knowledge and financial status of parents in providing support to their disabled child.

The third session of the workshop started with Prof. Philip Potter in the Chair. At the outset Prof. Philip Potter stressed the need to develop the COS with human training and to promote informal social reforms. He also emphasized the need for the promotion of linkage of higher education with NGOs. At the fag end of the session, newly appointed Vice-Chancellor of Utkal University, Prof. L.N. Mishra and Chairman Post-Graduate Council Prof. B. Mohanty were given a very warm welcome. They also participated in the discussion and made inquiry about the prospects and future of the project and what are the requisites need to be done for the functioning of the project. Prof. Asha Hans, Prof. S. Rath, Prof. N. C. Pati clarified all the questions put by the authority.

With this the Chairman declared the end of the first day workshop.

Proceedings of 2nd Day, dated 20/02/2005

The second day of the third internal workshop of the COS Project started on date 20/02/2005 with the presentation of Prof. Evemarie Knust-Potter of Dortmund University about their activities. In the discussion, she outlined the different points that need to be emphasized such as internal technical report, administrative issues, plan for the 4th internal workshop, plan for final conference, future report discussion, COS website chart, sustainability, future role of the advisory board. She discussed all the above stated points with all the partners.

Prof. Philip Potter of Klaus Novy Institute participated in the discussion and outlined the project according to the format of the E.U. organizational frame work and how it is functioning. He also explained the proceedings of different meetings that has taken place and discussed about the financial conditions. He wanted to know from their other partner Utkal University team regarding financial responsibility of the University. Sri S. Samal of NYASADRI participated in the discussion and suggested that accurate information in the field and the supply of it to the University will be beneficial to the academicians and researchers. He also emphasized about the natural sensitiveness of the people and use of EU's guidelines for the project. In the process a discussion was held between all the partners regarding the exchange of currency and about the financial structure of the European Union and Utkal University and a point emerged out of that the follow up of E.U. guideline is difficult in the Utkal University because it will create Audit problems.

Prof. Asha Hans participating in the discussion and explained the conflicting norms between all the partners and also a further discussion took place regarding the exchange rate of money and Euro and all the partners agreed with two broad aspects of the workshop that is (i) priority should be given to the international conference scheduled to be held in October, and (ii) introduction of a curriculum in the University. The final date for the next internal workshop of COS Project was decided to be held on 8th, 9th and 10th of September, 2005, at Bolton Institute. A discussion also took place among all the members

of COS Project regarding the final conference. A detailed analysis about all the arrangements for the final conference scheduled to be held at Bhubaneswar took place. The decision emerged out of the discussions is that there will be participation of 100 people including the academics, all the partners, member of the Advisory Board, and other NGOs working in Orissa for the disabled and the final date of conference were 5th, 6th, 7th January, 2005.

Prof. Joe Whittaker of Bolton Institute raised the issue of publication of report and the process of different activities going to be conducted. He suggested that all the document of all partners of COS Project should be put together in a particular format in the form of a comprehensive report to be submitted to the funding agency. Prof. Asha Hans suggested that all the report should be integrated and put in a website because publication in a printed form will lead to a number of problems.

A discussion took place about the perspective role of Advisory Board in implementing the project. Prof. Joe Whittaker said that the "Advisory Board can advise to all the partners while the project is being implemented. Because the members of the Advisory Board have the expertise and this can be sought through the E-connection. Mr. S. Samal of NYASADRI suggested that the Advisory Board should act as a group while Prof. Evemarie Knust-Potter suggested that the Advisory Board is not a group, they are individuals so that they can work independently. Prof. Philip Potter and Prof. N.C. Pati suggested that the collective use of Advisory Board will be better and all should try how the work should be done with a positive cooperation of the Advisory Board Members.

The second session of the second day workshop started with Prof. Evemarie Knust-Potter's different questions. She put forward the following questions :- (i) What do you understand by COS? (ii) What COS group we have developed in this project? (iii) Which NGOs are involved? (iv) What are the characteristics of focus group persons? (v) What are the contents of COS activities? (vi) How often the COS group meet? She also expressed her desire to rationalize the above stated questions and to put forward some new questions.

Prof. F.M. Sahoo of Utkal University team participated in the discussion and suggested the following points such as to link the physical support of disability to the social environment and what kind of networking are the individuals having. Participating in the discussion Prof. Evemarie Knust-Potter suggested that COS is a more individual view point. Why and what are the problems individuals are having. To this Prof. F.M. Sahoo added that awareness about the salient features of a disabled person is more important than labeling him.

Prof. N.C. Pati of Utkal University team explained that social programmes are there in COS. He made a distinction between India and E.U. He said that availability of service for the disabled persons is not problem in EU whereas very little service is available for the disabled persons in India. Most of the professional works in India are demonstrative in nature. Numbers of trained professionals are very few compared to the population of disabled persons. Service and educational programme must be included in the programme of the project in order to get the support of the parents, otherwise it will be very difficult for COS Project to work.

Prof. Joe Whittaker explained that “We are trying to create artificial things which must become natural” and the major barriers in the way of people for active participation should be detected.

Sri S. Samal of NYASADRI participating in the discussion suggested some field requisites that are needed for skill development, employment, and to live like others. They need care and love like others. He explained that the Govt. is not sensitive to the needs of the disabled. He highlighted two problems of selecting disabled for pension and services at the Govt. level. Though the Govt. is trying to involve primary education with the education for the disabled in an inclusive education setup, but still there are some teachers in the schools who are not taking due care of the disabled students. So the teacher needs training. He also highlighted the question of finance for the different actions intended to be taken. Discussing about the field activities in Orissa Prof. Evemarie Knust-Potter said that special expertise is developing in Orissa whereas it is available in U.K. and Germany. But in Orissa you can develop informal networking which is not available in U.K. and Germany.

Prof. Asha Hans participated in the discussion and said that “what actually do the people want should be kept in mind while planning different activities for the project. Prof. Joe Whittaker remarked that we are concerned with groups of people, who are collectively determining the ways for the service. Prof. Asha Hans remarked that the involvement of disable people in solving their problems can be better; otherwise it will be confined in the theory. Dr. Navin Kikabhai of Bolton Institute put some core questions on the subject that are : (i) limitations of COS in the changing process, (ii) in what more way the disable can play an active role, (iii) How can more people participate in the Advisory Board ?

The workshop ended for the second day aiming for the involvement of some more social organizations and voluntary associations in that work which is meant for the disabled in the next half year, that is February to September, 2005.

Report prepared by Prof. Asha Hans and Prof. Narayan Pati