

Goa University will live up to changing times: VC

Need to change teaching, learning process from being teacher-centric to student-centric, says Harilal Menon

The Vice Chancellor of Goa University, **Harilal Menon**, in an exclusive interview with 'The Navhind Times' speaks about the changing face of the university, including implementation of the NEP 2020, up-gradation of the examination result system, and setting up of the Konkani study centre in the neighbouring states. Here are the excerpts:

Ramnath N. Pai Raikar

What steps are being taken by the Goa University to implement the National Educational Policy 2020 at the higher education level?

Goa University has taken steps to introduce trans-disciplinary and interdisciplinary courses to make University in parallel with NEP 2020. University has recently peregrinated into a school system whereby myriad academic disciplines are either amalgamated or subsumed, in a cohesive and functional manner, so as to render and dispense qualitative multi-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary learning to our students in line with National Educational Policy 2020, as they embrace the dynamic and multifaceted challenges of the world. Many universities presently have school system but under each school there are departments, which bring in rigid separation and thus won't give free hands to students to select course of their choice. However, schools of Goa University will be headed by a Dean and assisted by two Vice Deans, as well as programme directors for respective programmes. This gives more flexibility to students to choose their own options. In addition, we have restructured our programmes and instead of 64 credits, GU now offers 80 credits, wherein one credit equals 15 hours. The two-year post-graduate programmes have also become research-oriented programmes. The second important initiative is introduction of Academic Bank of Credit, a concept followed on national level, which helps a Goa University student

who is moving to other university midway, to carry along his credits. Furthermore, for the first time in the country we have introduced M Sc/ MA Environmental Science, as this subject is not the monopoly of science students. We will also have four-year - eight semesters - under-graduation courses from the next academic year, with the last semester devoted to research. Therefore, the two-year post-graduation courses would be curtailed to one year.

Goa University is existing for over 35 years now, and with the changing trends in education, it needs to keep up with the advances in the field of education and teaching. Can you share with us such improvements being adopted or in the pipeline?

Over the last three and a half decades we have witnessed sea of changes in the scenario of education, more so as the knowledge is available at the tip of one's finger. The thought process in this regard was how to equip an individual who wish to obtain a certificate/ diploma for a decent life, without being physically present in a classroom. GU has initiated recording of lectures of skilled-based courses and will be offered on an online platform. This will also help to augment Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of higher education. In the state, the situation is satisfactory for girls, as out of 100 girl students, 35 could get access to higher education. In case of male students, this is only 21%. We want both to be at the 50% level. A survey revealed that the ratio is lower for boys not because they are not good in stud-



Vice Chancellor of Goa University Harilal Menon. -Nandesh Kambli

ies, but rather being the breadwinner of the family, have taken up jobs. For such students we will make provisions to augment their qualifications for a better return, from certificates to diplomas to degrees, just as the year of their study progresses.

We need to tap the potential of those students from technical institutes having ideas for incubation and a possibility of a startup. For this, an ecosystem is to be created wherein students can interact with industrial personnel. This will be done by establishing a Research Park on University campus. In addition, it is also planned to call for proposals from common public for funding so as to enable them for a startup. We are also planning to start post-graduation programmes in Remote Sensing and GIS and Atmospheric Sciences, which are relevant in the present context of vagaries of monsoon, which we witnessed in the year 2020 when Goa was hit by a cyclone. Through an ISRO-sponsored project, a meteorological tower was installed in the university campus to monitor atmospheric parameters vis-à-vis pollution. GU will also be offering programmes like Artificial Intelligence, Agricultural Science, Bio-medical Engineering and Ayurveda.

Moreover, initial discussions are on to tie up with foreign universities to offer dual degree and sandwich model degrees. It's also necessary to

change teaching/ learning process from being teacher-centric to student-centric. This will enable students to think and thus teacher to identify creativity/ potential hidden in a student for further development. Along with space learning, emotional learning has to be an integral component of learning process.

Community engagement is another component of a higher education institution. In this regard, we have adopted five villages, and marine farming in Madkai village has resulted good yield as personally witnessed by me. We are also in the process of developing two Apps on the basis of our scientific studies for which a doctorate degree has already been awarded. One is for identification of potential fishing zone and another for rate of sedimentation at port areas; both from the satellite data. This facilitates fishermen to get maximum catch with less physical effort and minimum expenditure. The Goa University further plans to set up a Carrier Guidance Bureau for those aspiring for administrative positions through UPSC examination.

Sir, there have been annual complaints from the students of the Goa University and its affiliated colleges as regards the delay in declaration of results by the university. It is said that the costly software used by the Goa

University for the purpose of computing results is faulty. Can you clarify on this aspect?

In the year 2014, the then administration had taken an initiative to develop Goa University Management System (GUMS) software, with different modules to handle various University activities such as admission, teaching and non-teaching staff leave, examination etc. Examination module for various programmes was based on Ordinances prevailing then. Since many new Ordinances were either framed or amended in the following years, they have to be incorporated in the examination modules of GUMS. The prime bidder for this software was M/S Keltion, while M/s Expedian was their software development partner. After many trial runs, the system was put to use in 2017. Though many modules worked smoothly, some had minor issues, particularly during the two years of development period which includes examination module that started giving errors in an unpredictable manner. The changes in the Ordinance/ new Ordinance effected during COVID-19 added further complexity. When I took over as the Vice Chancellor, the entire set up had been examined and as a result of various meetings with officials from examination, I am happy to tell you that GU has developed in-house software, which would take care of all undergraduate

general education and engineering discipline examinations. The software which was developed in the past by Goa University for result processing of Medicine/ Law is still functioning smoothly. Furthermore, we will also have central assessment programme on campus from the coming academic year. Therefore, henceforth, I don't expect any delay in announcement of results and my plan is to facilitate students to get their certificate on the mobile when they feed the registered number on the Uni website.

Goa University, for the past few years has been constantly sliding down at the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) ranking. What reasons do you see for this downfall?

Frankly speaking, our NIRF has not been affected much. For NIRF, there are five different parameters; namely teaching, learning and resources; research and professional practice; graduation outcome; outreach and inclusivity; and peer perception. The Goa University went under NIRF ranking from 2016, when there were 100 institutions participated in the ranking, while now there are almost 1,000 Institutions taking part in this process. In teaching, learning and resources we went from 48 to 50 in ranking weightage, from 2021 to year 2022. In research and professional practice we also improved as compared to last year. However, in case of graduation outcome, we suffered as a number of professors had retired from the university and the new recruits are yet to be recognised as guides. There are also cases of faculties at assistant professor cadre not having Ph.D. This resulted in the ranking weightage in this parameter coming down. Then under outreach and inclusivity, the score came down as we could not open up more seats to students from other states. Finally, the most affected parameter is peer percep-

tion, for which the score goes up only when more GU students take up jobs across the country. I feel the parents should allow their educated children to go out and take job, and only then this parameter will improve. I would also like to tell you that all the IITs and central universities have cent per cent weightage for this parameter. For this parameter we got a mere 2.47 out of 100. Along with this we have to face competition from private universities in this ranking exercise, which have no restrictions over admissions. In short I would like to say that Goa University ranking did not show any drop in the quality of its education and research.

Goa University has one of the most opulent library, in the country. Don't you feel that the material available in this library should not be limited to the students, and made available to those who want to take advantage of the same?

The library can be used by researchers, scholars, and even those who are passionate individuals. It is not closed for any knowledge seeker, irrespective of student or not. The only thing is that outsiders/ non-registered may not get online access to the library.

There have been a number of Chairs instituted at the Goa University level, during past decade. How are these Chairs functioning, and does the university continue to invite research professors in their fields to guide the students as guest lecturers, like it once invited Santiago Lusardi Girelli, Orjiji Sen, Romila Thapar, Shubha Mudgal and so on?

The visiting research professorship is a flagship programme of the university. We invite luminaries from across the country. Presently, we have 10 Chairs, 2 of which are private and the rest are funded by the government. Another one which is in the

pipeline is visiting research professorship in Climate Studies.

The Governor, P.S. Sreedharan Pillai, who is also the Chancellor of the Goa University had spoken at the recent convocation ceremony about the university setting up Konkani language institutes in neighbouring states like Kerala, Karnataka and Maharashtra for the promotion of the language. Is the Goa University ready for it?

NEP 2020 clearly indicates the need to strengthen regional language. After taking over as the Vice Chancellor, based on meetings with heads of erstwhile department of Konkani and presently a part of language school, I realised that there is no Konkani journal under the University Grants Commission's Consortium for Academic and Research Ethics (CARE) list. We do have a journal, 'Sassai', but it needs to be brought under the CARE list. So, we have started related process, with an editorial board to be comprised of scholars from across the country. The process is on and we will soon have a Konkani journal in the UGC CARE list. There is a large population of Konkani-speaking people across Kerala and in the southern part of Karnataka. To connect them with their mother tongue/ roots, it is decided to establish Goa University's Konkani Study Centre at Cochin first and subsequently at Mangalore. In this regard, I would like to inform you that last month, I had a meeting with officials of Sukirindra Oriental Research Institute at Kochi, in Kerala, which is a recognised centre for research in Sanskrit for M.G. University in Kerala. They will assist us in setting up this Centre for Konkani Studies. In fact, there are around 2.5 lakh Konkani-speaking people in Kerala. We want to offer online programme for this centre and the details are being worked out.