

## **Present Status of YCMOU Study Centers in Khandesh Area of Maharashtra - A Survey**

Prof. Satish Rastogi, Director, Evaluation Division, YCM Open University, Nashik - 422222, India  
& Secretary General, Indian Distance Education Association (IDEA)

Email: [satish\\_rastogi1@rediffmail.com](mailto:satish_rastogi1@rediffmail.com)

Mrs. Shobhana Mahajan, Lecturer, College of Education, Taloda, Nandurbar, Maharashtra, India

The Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University at Nasik in Maharashtra State of India has been established to achieve a target of 'Dnyanganga Gharoghari' meaning Education at the doorsteps of all. The University has at present established 2646 Study Centers to be operated through 08 Regional centers for 164 programmes in whole Maharashtra through Marathi and English Medium. The study centers situated at various places of the state are normally Colleges or Technical Education Centres offering education through conventional mode. The infrastructure of these institutions are used by distance learners during study. The YCMOU is not having its independent centres throughout the state of Maharashtra. Khandesh area in Maharashtra is covered by 03 Districts named as Dhule, Jalgaon & Nandurbar being at border with Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh. This area is much backward regarding facilities for higher Education. The YCMOU started its study centers during 1991 in Khandesh Area. The Center Incharge, Co-ordinator, and the counsellors as well as students of YCMOU had many difficulties, hardships & other barriers to education. It was thought as essential to study these and suggest some remedies for the same. The student enrollment was found increasing, while the basic facilities at these study centers were not appropriate and proper. This survey was done with a view to improving the status of Khandesh Study Centres of YCMOU, Nasik.

### **Objectives of this study**

- 1) To study problems related to physical facilities like Building, Campus, Library Etc. at study centers of Khandesh region.
- 2) To take a stock of various difficulties faced by learners at different stages of YCMOU Programmes in Khandesh region.
- 3) To assess non-academic problems faced by YCMOU students during completion of their studies.
- 4) To bring better rapport among students, counsellors and study centre staff for a smooth conduct of their role, responsibilities and duties towards one another.
- 5) To recommend some suitable, affordable, and economical measures for smooth dealings among various groups, meeting at study centres of Khandesh area.

### **Assumptions behind this study**

1. The YCMOU students face some Problems during in academic and non-academic dealings by study center staff .
2. The study center staff faces many lacunas while dealing with YCMOU learners.
3. The academic staff needs training /orientation for a better dealing with the students.

### **Limitations of this Study**

1. The study was limited to Khandesh Area of Maharashtra covering Jalgaon, Dhule,& Nandurbar Districts only.
2. Only, Students, Centre Co-ordinator, Centre Incharge & Counsellors had been taken for this study by excluding other persons.
3. The study centers from Rural and Urban areas having different programmes had been selected for this survey .

## **Methodology Adopted**

The investigators had developed Questionnaires and Rating Scales for Center Incharge, Coordinators, Counsellors, and students. These tools were based on the objectives of this project. These were developed & modified by seeking experts' opinion. These tools were used for data collection. The investigators made an interaction with the students to know their views about the problems faced by them and their suggestions to meet these problems. An Interview schedule for Centre Coordinator was developed and used to seek their opinion about various problems faced by them at the Study Centre. The investigators made a personal visit to Study Centers for an on the spot study of existing situation. There are 18 Study Centers for B.A & B.Com Programmes & 22 Study Centers for Computer Programmes offered by YCMOU Nasik. The questionnaires and Rating Scales were sent to all these 40 Centers followed by a visit to 7 Study Centres. Three Study Centres visited were at district Headquarters and Four were at Taluka places. The Investigators had taken help from the Science of Management. It states that a good quality output is based on the quality of process which again depends upon the quality of input used for this process. Every input has been divided into 5 M. These are Man (Center Incharge, Counsellors, Centre Co-Ordinator, etc), Machine (Teaching Aids, Both Electronic and Non-Electronic, Computers, Teaching Machines, Etc), Money (Financial Implications like fees collection, remuneration paid to Centre staff and other expenses), Material (Students who come as raw material and go back as final product), and Method (Counselling, strategies for meeting academic & non academic needs). After discussion and observations by the researchers, it was found that the workers at the study centers had to take care of classroom environment, use of instructional aids for teaching, individual differences among students, Mastery learning, Feedback from the students for their problems and feedback to them for meeting these problems, availability of resources, sources for contact with the students, administrative works and counselling at the study centre. These were major issues for this study. An analysis of opinion expressed by the target groups revealed some common views on various issues. These may be implemented and are positive in favour of, University objective of 'Dnyanganga Gharoghari' meaning 'Education for all'. These have been summarised below as findings of this study. Also, there were some specific views based on individual opinion, but were not possible for implementation being in practice and not economical too. Such views have been deleted from the findings and so are not included in recommendations.

## **Findings of this Study**

It was found that very few study centers were using teaching aids. No individual attention was paid to students. The number of rooms, Tables, Chairs, Black-Boards, etc. were sufficient in numbers. But, T.V. facility for YCMOU students was not available. The University rules and regulations are followed by the centre staff. Contacts with the students is only through the contact sessions. The Centre co-ordinator, Counsellors, and the students exchange their views and ideas at the study centre. VCD, Radio, Tape recorder and Television are not much in use due to being not available at the study centers. The University pays remuneration on yearly basis to every study centre. The Centre Incharge and the counsellors are not given much money as per their expectations causing disappointment. The learning material (books) supplied by YCMOU is also large in number and has been kept in safe places by the study centre staff. The counsellors are delivering lectures in the name of counselling at the study centres. They need an orientation about their role as a counsellor.

The University is not having its own building in every district to run a Multipurpose study centre having enough physical facilities like rooms, chairs, tables, benches and teaching aids etc. for counselling and conducting examinations. The Present study centres in Khandesh area did not have adequate library facilities like Books and Reference materials, Audio / Video CD's as well as a facility to view these. There should be a study room for independent study by YCMOU students. The University had not supplied Audio / Video support as well as some money

for a repair, to these study centres. The counsellors are not skilled for using these during counselling sessions. They desired proper orientation for using audiovisual support. The students also had favoured the same idea being essential for staff development among counsellors of that region. Number of contact sessions for different courses was desired for being increased in order to cover up learner difficulties in every course of BA and B.Com programme. The students were not motivated to raise their queries, questions, and confusions, during contact sessions. The counsellors suggested that the students be admitted to next stage of their study in B.A.or B.Com Programme only after a successful completion of the present stage. In no case, a student be allowed to appear in more than 06 courses of their study. Those, who have not cleared F.Y.stage, be not admitted to S.Y.stage and so on. It may reduce the study burden at the time of examination. Female students from far places face accommodation problem during counselling sessions and End Examination.

The target groups advised to plan for multy purpose study centres at every block (Taluka) level and a District Centre at every District place of Khandesh region. The out station students demanded for Travel Concession for coming to study centers. Regular correspondence was felt essential with students, who demanded their letters through study centres. It will help for a timely correspondence. The counsellors advised for some incentives to students regarding a 75% attendance during contact sessions. The students being in job demanded for duty leave for attending contact sessions & examinations. A separate counselling session be organised for guidance regarding writing assignments completion, as well as some tips for appearing in examination. A feed back about the Self Instructional Materials be revealed for course maintenance and course revision. The students mostly had preferred B.A. in place of B.Com. They deserve some motivation on for admission to B.Com Programme. Some courses of B.Com Programme are not from Commerce side.

Many students found English as difficult subject. The counsellor suggested for booklet / material for guidance to students regarding study of English Subject.

Some border students demanded Hindi as a medium for B.A & B.Com programmes. They demanded Bachelor of Science and Bachelor degree in Drama be started by the University.

The students desired to add following courses as optional subjects looking to Social demands.-

- a) Social challenges in present day situation.
- b) Hindi Literature.
- c) Indian Philosophies.
- d) Political Science.
- e) Logic
- f) Modern World
- g) Indian Rural Life its Problems and solutions.
- h) Physical Education.
- i) Pollution Control
- j) Environmental awareness
- k) Maths
- l) English Special
- m) Geography
- n) Technical Subjects
- o) General Knowledge for competitive Examinations
- p) Sanskrit
- q) Freedom from various addictions (Vyasnmukti)

Some female students demanded new vocational courses be added to B.A & B.Com Programmes, for example Home Science, Tailoring, Child Development, being useful for

them. The students demanded for counselling sessions to be run till prescribed time ends. They further demanded for declaration of results in time with no delay. Along with written test the oral test & group discussion should also be organised. It should have due weightage in result declaration. The students were of view to appearing in examination for only one course in a day. It will give them sufficient time for preparation regarding other courses. Some students demanded for additional time to write answers during three hours examination time. They demanded sample question paper much before examination. They demanded for reduction of examination fees. They were in favour of reducing minimum passing marks in B.A. and B.Com. Programme. The economically backward students demanded same incentives as are fixed by the Government of Maharashtra for them in Colleges and Conventional Universities. The students desired for the examination to be conducted under strict supervision in order to avoid copying & other malpractices.

The students demanded learning material supply in time to Study Centres & Students in order to avoid a delay. Some counsellors were fresh and not oriented about their role in ODL system. They demanded for an orientation to work as counselor. During this orientation, they wanted to be familiar with the course curriculum, Examination System, Learner Evaluation, Role of assignments etc. The respondents were in favour of a Y.C.M.O.U. full time officer to work at district level. It would help to solve local problems easily & early. He may provide every information to needy persons. There should be a direct contact between District centre & Headquarters through Fax, Phone & E-mail, etc. The study centre staff demanded more money as remuneration as well as a full time assistant at every existing study centre for a speedy & efficient communication between students & the University in Khandesh region. The students demanded some seats be reserved for YCMOU graduates regarding B.Ed. admissions.

### **Recommendations**

Following were recommendations for improvements in Study Center functioning.

01. The University should manage a compulsory training / orientation of study center staff about their role with ODL system and use of modern teaching aids.
02. Proper infrastructure of teaching aids (Electronic and Non Electronic) be made available by the Study Centers in collaboration with the University.
03. The University should plan for a District Centre in every district of Khandesh region. It should work as Multipurpose Resource Center being well equipped with necessary infrastructure in Khandesh area of Maharashtra.
04. The University should supply reference Books Audio / Video CD's related to course content under study.
05. The study center in Khandesh area be permitted to have more number of contact sessions. But, the payment for these extra sessions be made through money, collected from the needy students.
06. The student after completion of first year be admitted to second year in B.A. and B.Com. programmes. Same should be followed for second year stage also. It would be beneficial to the University for preparing examination time table. No student should be allowed to appear in more than 6 courses at a time. It will help them to appear in examination for one course only in a day.
07. The University in collaboration with examination / study center should make stay arrangements for out station students on payment basis.

08. The University should plan for its independent Study Center / Resource Centers of its own. It may work as a Multi purpose study center for all programmes in rural areas of Khandesh region.
09. The demand for travel concession to students for attending counseling sessions and appearing in end examination seems to be not acceptable because many students are in service and are above age of 25 years. Hence travel concession may not be admitted in their cases.
10. Proper publicity of B.Com. programmes and its future prospects be made in rural areas of Khandesh region. It may increase student number for B.Com. programme.
11. The University may take help from Central Institute of English and other Foreign Languages (CIEFL) Hyderabad for developing some remedial package regarding English subject.
12. The University should plan for Bachelor's degree in Science, Dramas. The University may add some new courses being optional to B.A. and B.Com. programmes. These may be stated from A to Q in findings section on page – 5 of this paper.
13. Female students be given some Vocational courses as optional subject for their degree programme. These may be Home Science, Child Development, Tailoring being useful to them.
14. The University should try to maintain 30 to 45 days time limit for declaring the results.
15. A dialog with Government of Maharashtra be initiated for implementing some incentives to Other Backward Class (OBC) students as followed by Conventional Universities and Colleges.
16. As far as possible, the students be supplied book and other learning material in time. The correspondence with them may be done through the study centers in order to avoid delay.
17. A full time University officer be posted in all the three districts Headquarters namely Dhule, Jalgaon and Nandurbar of Khandesh region in order to help students for meeting their problems quickly and easily. It may control dropout rate among rural area students.
18. The remuneration rates for study center staff be revised looking to old rates not acceptable to them.
19. In B.Ed. programme some seats be reserved for University Graduates. The University may discuss this issue with Government of Maharashtra and National Council for Teachers Education (NCTE) New Delhi.

### **Conclusion**

This research was conducted for improving role of study centres of Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University, Nashik in Khandesh area being backward enough in Maharashtra state of India. The study centre staff and students of 7 study centres were interviewed in person as well as their views were taken through Questionnaires. The information received from centre incharge, centre co-ordinator, students of 40 centres, on the spot study of 07 study centres revealed, many valuable information related to man power, teaching aids, financial matters, materials, methods, etc. The over all opinion of the respondents as analysed, showed some practically possible demands to be accepted as recommendations for improvements through training to Man power. Establishment of district centre in every district of Khandesh area, supply of necessary teaching aids (Electronic and non electronic) at study centres, and more remuneration to part-time workers at study centres, an eight to ten days orientation course for counsellors about their role, be organised by the University at its Nashik being its Headquarters. The recommendations are very useful for the University regarding upgradation of the facilities at study centers within the Khandesh Area being backward and tribal dominated region of Maharashtra State in India.

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