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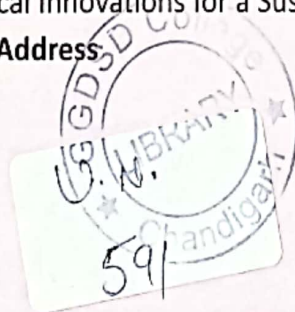
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Bridging the Linguistic Gap in Higher Education through Collaboration: A Case Study

Rajeev Kumar Shukla* and Nayantara Padhi Mishra**

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasizes the importance of mother tongue-based education, particularly in foundational learning. NEP 2020 recognizes that language is more than just a communication tool; it is a vehicle for culture, identity, and knowledge. By delivering education in a learner's native language, NEP 2020 aims to deepen understanding, build confidence, and foster a more accessible and inclusive learning environment. The Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), a global leader in distance education, has been a key player in implementing this vision. Through a strategic partnership with the government of Odisha, IGNOU is now making its high-quality educational content accessible to a wider audience in the Odia language.

IGNOU has long been a force in democratizing education, offering affordable and flexible learning opportunities to millions. Its wide reach, with 69 regional centers and over 2000 study centers in India, plus 25 overseas study centers in 15 countries, along with its diverse and high-quality course content, made it a perfect partner for Project e-Kumbh, an initiative by AICTE to provide educational materials in different Indian languages. Initially, e-Kumbh focused on translating engineering books, but it soon expanded to include other professional disciplines, most notably through a collaboration with IGNOU to translate its MBA program course materials into 12 Indian languages to align with the NEP 2020's focus on multilingual education.

The collaboration's first phase involved translating IGNOU's MBA course materials into Hindi and Odia. This effort provided a blueprint for future projects. When the Minister of Higher Education for the government of Odisha, Mr. Suraj, attended the launch of the Odia-translated MBA materials as a special guest, he recognized a significant opportunity: leveraging the translation of IGNOU's study materials for other programs into Odia to benefit students across his state. He realized that translating existing, high-quality IGNOU course materials would be far more time- and cost-effective than developing new courses from scratch.

Scaling the Initiative: A Partnership with the State of Odisha

Based on the minister's vision, the Ministry of Higher Education, Government of Odisha, and IGNOU signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to translate IGNOU's course materials into

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