



KALINGA INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES (KISS)

Deemed to be University, Bhubaneswar - 751024

(Declared under Section 3 of UGC Act, 1956)

7.3.1 Institutional distinctiveness

Q: Portray the performance of the Institution in one area distinctive to its priority and thrust within 1000 words

A:

Educating, enabling, and empowering Tribal Communities

The roots of KISS-DU, the world's first and only university exclusively for tribal students, go back to 1993, as a school with only 125 tribal children at a rented house in Bhubaneswar. Two and a half decades later, it stands out as a unique model for tribal empowerment. Most of its students are first-generation learners from some of the most marginalized and vulnerable communities. The university's operation is dedicated to the core principle that higher education must be inclusive and equitable while simultaneously contributing towards preserving indigenous cultures, languages, knowledge systems, and sustainable ways of living.

The University came into being to pursue academic excellence in innovative domains of study relating to indigenous lives and cultures. It seeks to bring the gift of higher education to indigenous students free of cost, empowering them with adequate domain knowledge, life skills, leadership, and entrepreneurial skills. The university is committed to promoting indigenous knowledge systems in harmony with the imperatives of scientific rationality, continuously striving for quality enhancement in academic and institutional governance through a culture of credibility and transparency. The institution seeks to orient indigenous communities towards a global perspective of the SDGs by training indigenous students as agents of social change in their communities.

The University has introduced seven new innovative schools to encourage research on tribal studies. These are Tribal Legal studies and Tribal rights, Tribal Resource Management, Tribal culture and heritage, Tribal Languages, Tribal medicine and Tribal Technology, Indic studies, etc. Most importantly, all students at the university receive residential education, lodging, food, and healthcare free of cost.

The University has appointed distinguished academicians, including former and sitting Vice-Chancellors, as Emeritus Professors. They guide and advise the institution in innovative research.

In regard to innovative institutional governance, mention must be made of the Tribal Advisory Council (TAC), which provides insights and policy recommendations with the remit that all projects and undertakings at the university must accommodate a diverse range of indigenous perspectives. Its twenty members, all of whom come from indigenous communities, are distinguished academics, public servants, and social workers with in-depth knowledge of tribal cultures and concerns. Major recommendations of the TAC, such as the Working Committee for the Protection, Preservation, and Promotion of Tribal Cultural Diversity and Professors of Practice and research chairs on tribal Icons, have already been implemented.

The University has inducted fourteen outstanding practitioners of various tribal knowledge practices as Professors of Practice. They represent mastery over domains such as tribal medicine, painting, language, scripts, jewellery design, textiles, music, dance, and folklore. The university has been working with them to evolve mechanisms to codify and standardize their special expertise in conformity with conventional academic protocols.

The University celebrates a series of tribal cultural festivals following recommendations from the TAC such as Baha Parab and Chait Parab. Similarly, Professors of Practice regularly visit and teach various cultural practices to interested students. Classes were organized on Danta dance of the Santal tribe, the Dhemsas dance of the Gadaba tribe, the Karma dance of the Oraon tribe, Dandar dance of the Gond tribe. One student earned a Ph.D. in machine learning through the Ho Language.

The University regularly commemorates the contribution of tribal icons and heroes through seminars and the development of innovative academic modules. Statues of Birsa Munda and Laxman Naik were unveiled on the campus.

Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTBMLE) has been a singularly successful project. It was a response to the problem of a lag in educational attainment because of relative unfamiliarity with the language of instruction. The authorities, following article 350A of the Indian constitution and anticipating NEP 2020, entrusted the university faculty and students to design and run a Mother Tongue based Transition Curriculum at the elementary level. Based on extensive language mapping and case studies, teaching and learning materials were prepared in ten indigenous languages. The project won the UNESCO King Sejong literacy award in 2022. The award, sponsored by the Government of the Republic of Korea, carries an endowment of \$20000.

Most recently, the university organized, jointly with the Ministry of Culture of the government of India, a week-long Janjatiya Gaurav Divas festival to celebrate and commemorate the contribution of tribal communities to India's diversity and freedom. Addressing over 25000 students and staff members, Union Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Culture, Arjun Ram Meghwal, lauded the KISS model as a model of best practices for institutions working on education and employment generation for marginalized communities.

KISS-DU has set up an innovation council with seven innovative research centres under it. The research Centres seek to step up research activities, building an eco-system for incubation and startup ventures. The following are the seven innovative research centres.

1. Centre for Indigenous Innovation and Entrepreneurship
2. Centre for Sacred Groves
3. Centre for Indigenous Cultural Heritage and Diversity
4. Centre for Indigenous Science and Technology
5. Centre for Indigenous Knowledge on Herbal Medicines and Therapeutics
6. Centre for Indigenous Languages and Narratives.
7. Centre for the Study of Indigenous Peoples across the Globe

The top-class sports facilities at the university have produced several sportspersons representing their country at national and international events. With an impressive range of 24 different sports, KISS-DU, in partnership with its sister concern KIIT University, is one of the country's leading centres for student sports.

Three particular components make KISS-DU special. The first is its unique status as a university for tribal students and its exclusive focus on knowledge production around tribal knowledge systems and practices. The second is the strong institutional emphasis on experiential learning and student empowerment through mainstreaming tribal knowledge practices. Finally, by emphasising sporting excellence and strong vocational training programmes, the university responds to the needs of employment generation and empowerment of its students and their parent communities.

Documents Attached

- [Janjatiya Gaurav Divas Bulletin](#)
- [Response to COVID-19 Crisis](#)
- [KISS-DU SDG](#)