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STATE OPEN UNIVERSITY TO BOOST SKILL GROWTH

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The State Government has decided to boost skill development education through a new State Open University (SOU).

“Now, skill development is the buzz word and the SOU will discharge this huge task with all sincerity,” said Principal Secretary of Department of Higher Education (DoHE) Gagan Kumar Dhal. The SOU can provide skill development education courses to thousands of youths, he said.

In Odisha, nearly five lakh students at various levels are dropping out from the educational institutions and these dropouts can be targeted for skill development certificate, diploma and degree with employability skills to be more employable, said Dhal.

Presently, the five State Universities running Distance Education Courses are not imparting Skill Development Courses. Annually, 14,000 students are enrolled in these five universities, Utkal, Berhampur, Sambalpur, North Odisha and Fakir Mohan University.

Dhal said the SOU would work out modalities for recognition and standardisation of the skill development education in the State. As the State Government is funding the SOU with an initial amount of Rs 30 crore and

Rs 5 crore per annum as recurring expenditure for next five years, which comes to Rs 55 crore, the SOU would be able in providing quality education in the Distance Education form as there would be no financial constraints, feels Dhal.

An area of 10 acres of land would be provided to the SOU in the Vani Vihar campus and the process of its acquisition has already started, said an official in DoHE.

With the responsibility of the State to ensure quality education and not to exploit the students by offering substandard and low standard education in an unauthorised manner by the franchise holders, the State Government has decided to allow the State Open University to guide all the five State Universities, the sources said.

There are 13 State Open Universities in various States, and most of the Distance Education programmes are offered by these institutions through franchise holders. Most of the franchise holders are not adhering to quality education and students are exploited, which needs to be stopped through statutory provisions, feel leading education experts.

Keeping this in view, the Odisha Government has allowed the SOU to standardise the course and curriculum for the Distance Education programme with the help of experts, the sources added.