

2.AFTER INTERMEDIATE WHAT? (COURSES)

ii.) VOCATIONAL COURSES Degree -level

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It has been observed over a period of time that the incidence of unemployment and under-employment amongst university graduates is increasing. The Live Register of Employment Exchanges indicated that the increase in the number of persons seeking employment assistance had been higher in case of educated than the unskilled workers in general. Due to the oversupply of the graduates, competition for the jobs earlier performed by less qualified persons grew. In particular, employment possibilities of graduates and post-graduates of general subjects were becoming increasingly limited.

Similarly, the education imparted did not match the requirements of the labor market.

The kind of education offered also was not oriented to employment. Educational institutions were not equipped to visualize precisely, and provide for, training in required traits. Moreover, skill requirements of occupations changed continually in response to technological changes.

Attempts to restructure the Indian education have been made from time to time.

One such attempt was to introduce the vocational education at the senior secondary level.

The main focus of this type of education was to convert the senior secondary into the terminal stage of education. Unfortunately, the objectives of vocationalization of secondary education could not be realized. Several factors contributed to the failure, which included the mismatch between skills training and knowledge imparted and required for the available jobs. Secondly, the supply of manpower was much in surplus of the possible demand. In this situation the pass-outs of the secondary level education ended to flock to colleges and universities. This trend had been putting tremendous pressure on the universities and colleges material and manpower resources. But the colleges and universities were unable to absorb these students appropriately.

This prompted the University Grants Commission to initiate a number of program related to career oriented knowledge and skills during the Fifth Five Year Plan and in early eighties. The National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986 (revised in 1992) of the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, and subsequent Program of Action 1992 (drawn from NPE) also emphasized the need of exposing the university and college students to the application-oriented courses. Later, to review the scenario at the first-degree level and to make suitable recommendations, the University Grants Commission constituted a Core Committee under the Chairmanship of Dr. T.N. Dhar. The Committee proposed that the basic structure of the present three-

year degree course should remain the same and along with that, a student should also select at least one vocational subject.

On the basis of the recommendations made by the Dhar Committee, University Grants Commission (UGC) launched the scheme of vocational education in the academic session of 1994-95. The different aims of the scheme pertained to preparation of graduates for employment, filling up of intermediate job positions arising due to the new economic policy, assurance of adequate supply of skilled persons for non-formal demands, development of capabilities of students with support from financial and other institutions to set up their own small enterprises, provision and assurance of vertical mobility in addition to the horizontal employability after graduation and provide employment in the rural and agro-based sectors. Increasing employability in rural areas was intended to act as a check on the rural urban migration, and finally vocational education was intended to provide education to women corresponding to market needs.

This curriculum of vocational education was introduced as a part of under-graduate courses of Arts, Science, Commerce, Engineering & Technology. The curriculum of vocational education included the following disciplines at the first degree level:

ARTS, HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES:-

1. Functional Hindi
2. Functional Sanskrit
3. Communicative English
4. Archaeology & Musicology

COMMERCE AND ECONOMICS:-

1. Principles & Practices of Insurance
2. Actuarial Science
3. Office Management & Secretarial Practice
4. Tax Procedures & Practices
5. Foreign Trade Practices & Procedures
6. Tourism and Travel Management
7. Advertising, Sales Promotion & Sales Management
8. Computer Applications

SCIENCES:-

1. Industrial Chemistry (Seven streams)
2. Food Science & Quality Control
3. Clinical Nutrition Dietetics

4. Industrial Microbiology
5. Bio-technology
6. Biological Technique & Specimen Preparation
7. Seed Technology
8. Sericulture
9. Industrial Fish & Fishery
10. Instrumentation
11. Optical Instrumentation
12. Geo-exploration & Drilling Technology
13. Mass Communication Video Production
14. Still Photography Audio Products

ENGINEERING & TECHNOLOGY:-

1. Electronic Equipment Maintenance
2. Computer Maintenance
3. Electrical Equipment Maintenance
4. Environment & Water Management
5. Rural Technology
6. Automobiles Maintenance
7. Refrigeration & AC Maintenance
8. Construction Technology & Management
9. Manufacturing Process at present this scheme is being implemented in 100 Universities covering 1317.

Colleges:-

Keeping in view the above facts, and also to expand the coverage, UGC is looking towards the Planning Commission to raise the Ninth Plan outlay for Vocational Education. It also wishes that the Eighth Plan expenditure be converted into non-plan expenditure. In order to examine the performance of the scheme of vocational education, the Planning Commission wished that IAMR undertake an in-depth analysis of the vocational education scheme of the UGC and its impact at the undergraduate level. Hence a study was undertaken.

Vocational Education at the undergraduate level was introduced basically because of the lack of employment opportunities for pass-outs of the conventional degree courses.

Employment possibilities of graduates and post-graduates in general subjects were becoming increasingly limited and vocational scheme was implemented by the UGC in 1994-95 with the primary objective of increasing the employability of graduates.

Equipping the graduates with the skills needed for self-employment. improving the employability of girl students, making the graduate course suited to local needs and conditions etc., were some of the major objectives of the vocational courses. So, along with conventional degree courses, one vocational

subject was added from 35 identified subjects in four streams, viz., (I) Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences; (ii) Commerce & Economics; (iii) Sciences; (iv) Engineering & Technology.

Increasing the employability of graduate students became an urgent necessity as the state started moving away from its role as the provider of jobs with the liberalization introduced in India from mid 1980s. Liberalization and globalization became more pronounced from early 90s onwards with the disinvestment in Indian public sector, the free flow of capital and technology and the revolution in information technology.

Simultaneously, many new sectors opened up and new job opportunities were also thrown up which required only minimum training. Vocational courses were meant to incorporate all these changes and impart skills to the students undergoing vocational courses accordingly. The IAMR undertook this study on vocational education with the basic objective of reviewing the existing courses by looking at the employability of the pass-outs, the limitation in the infrastructure and the improvements required. To suggest ways and means to improve the employability of girl students and to make the course suited to local needs and conditions was also the objective of the study. Structured questionnaires were given to heads of institutions, teachers, students, pass-outs and experts dealing with vocational education. The study team covered four states namely, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh.

The universities covered are :

(i) Madurai Kamraj University. (ii) Karnataka University, Dharwad (iii) Gujarat University, Ahmedabad and (iv) Devi Alhiya University, Indore. Besides the members of the study team, local investigators were appointed to solicit views from pass-outs and others. One has to look at the broad guidelines issued by the University Grants Commission before commenting on whether things are practically implemented or not. The study teams field visit was basically to examine whether the detailed guidelines issued by UGC has been followed in the field. Before stating our conclusions a glance at the UGC guidelines will certainly help to understand the problem better. The broad UGC guidelines regarding the basic objectives of the courses are:

(v) Considering the limited absorptive capacity of the organized sector the emphasis in the proposed vocational courses would have to be on the development of capabilities required for self-employment and diversifying Laboratory and workshop and infrastructure modernization have to be undertaken from the resources of the institutions.

(vi) Institutions are expected to raise additional resources other than the UGC assistance for five years.

(vii) On-the-job-training should be an integral part of the proposed vocational

subjects. The training should be given in employing establishments under joint supervision of the establishments supervisory personnel and the faculty of vocational institutions. Vocational education institutions have to make arrangement for on-the-job-training for students undergoing the course.

(viii) Memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the employing establishments is desirable.

(ix) There should be general awareness about the course.

(x) Stipends should be given to students during their on-the-job-training.

(xi) There should be appropriate mechanism for monitoring and evaluation of the entire programme.

An evaluation of vocational education scheme was done by the study team to see whether the above mentioned objectives have been fulfilled or not with the limited manpower and resources at our command. Paucity of time was a major constraining factor. Another problem was that only a few of the pass-outs were employed as the vocational courses are quite new. But in spite of all the above cited problems a proper evaluation was done. The result of the evaluation actually presents a very dismal picture of the vocational courses as it exists today. The main observations of the study team are the following:

(i) Overall the vocational courses have instilled a yearning for job among the undergraduates. More than ninety-six percent of the students undergoing vocational course indicated in our survey that they want to work either in some organizations, or start their own enterprise or to contribute to the family enterprise.

(ii) Vocational courses have failed to detract students aspiration for a government job and promote self-employment. During the course of our survey, 60 percent of the total students contacted rated a government job as their first priority and 25 percent opted for private jobs. Most of the pass-outs also specifically told us that they prefer government jobs. This means that the general perception of candidates looking for employment holds among the undergraduates at vocational level also.

(iii) The study team could not find any enrichment of the course content according to local needs and conditions in the four universities we covered although the UGC allows universities to modify the courses that way. In fact, lack of vision of the university and college authorities act as a major handicap as they cannot equip students with the requisite knowledge needed for local advancement.

(iv) Lack of infrastructure and absence of teachers trained especially for the vocational course act as a major handicap for the course. In fact the study team could not find a single college where students are using laboratories/workshops of other institutions or establishments although the UGC guidelines desires that way. Field visits and visits to companies are

almost absent. Timely availability of reading materials and adequate library facilities are also not there. Teachers equipped with the special skills needed to teach the new vocational subjects are very few. As the course is quite new, many teachers and institutions are still unaware of the objectives of the course.

(v) The study team could not find continuous upgradation of the course. Continuous upgradation requires good vision regarding the needs of the labour market, local needs and conditions, ways to increase employability among girl students and so on. Apart from these, the authorities while drafting the syllabus should have an in-depth knowledge and they should be further aware of latest trends in the discipline. But, unfortunately, such visionary efforts are lacking in the case of vocational courses.

(vi) No proper monitoring and evaluation of vocational courses has been going on. Continuous monitoring, proper evaluation and constant upgradation were planned by policy makers while framing vocational courses. But this has been seldom carried out.

(vii) We found very little awareness about the existing vocational course structure. Unless and until awareness is there, students cannot apply for vocational degree courses after 10+2 (pre-degree) course. Many subjects such as functional Sanskrit are totally unheard of among the students.

(viii) Regarding employability - the main objective of the courses, we found vocational courses almost failing to achieve that objective. Seldom on-the-job-training is given to vocational students. We could not find any memorandum of understanding (MOU) between vocational institutions and employing establishments. Also, the study team could not find any institution stipulating apprenticeship training or giving stipends to the students. Further, there was no career guidance and counseling. Campus recruitment was almost totally absent.

(ix) Increasing the employability of girl students has also met with little success. Apart from social constraints, the timings in the colleges, long duration of the course etc. comes in the way of girls opting for vocational courses. It seems all institutions have failed to draw up innovative ways to introduce courses so as to increase the employability among girl students. Recommendations Understanding the causes of the dismal picture of the vocational education scheme itself calls for solutions. The recommendations presented here are the views that the study team gathered from various quarters, namely the views expressed by different people met in the field, the views expressed by experts on this topic and data we gathered from structured questionnaires given to Heads of Institutions, Teachers etc.

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