

Report of the Committee on the “Concept and Framework of the Community College Scheme”

Introduction

1 In the Indian way of thinking, a human being is a precious national resource, which needs to be nurtured and developed with tenderness and care, coupled with dynamism. Each individual's growth presents a different range of challenges and demands, at every stage from birth to death. Education plays a catalytic role in this complex and dynamic growth process and hence it needs to be planned meticulously and executed with great sensitivity. It is fundamental to all-round human development, both material and spiritual. It also has an acculturating role in the society coupled with a feeding role in the economy. In short, education is a unique investment in the present as well as in the future.

2. Education has continued to evolve, diversify and extend its reach and coverage since the dawn of human history. Every country develops its own system of education to express and promote its unique socio-cultural identity besides meeting the challenges of the times to encash the existing potential opportunities. India, at present, is recognized as one of the younger nations in the world with over 50% of the population under the age of 30 years. The Census projection report shows that the proportion of population in the working age group (15-59 years) is likely to increase from approximately 58% in 2001 to more than 64% by 2021 which is about 30.8 crore during the period. It is estimated that by about 2025, India will have 25% of the world's total workforce. But beyond 2025, with increased life span due to advanced medical care, the numbers of the aged will begin to increase substantially and consequently the window of opportunity is only between now and 2025. In order to harness the full demographic dividend, India needs an education system, which is of high quality, affordable, flexible and relevant to individual as well as to the society in general and the economy in particular. Thus, it calls for substantive use of technology uninhibitedly and establishing closer relation between education and the life of the people for providing opportunities by way of life-long learning.

3. India has a population of over 120 crore and a workforce of around 51 crore, to be able to provide employment to such a large number of people, the numbers of which is more than the entire population of countries like USA, is more than a daunting task and is going to get even more challenging with the population growing by more than 2% every year. With the current levels of unemployment being around 4.6 crore, it is likely to grow to anywhere between 5-6 crore in the next 8-10 years. To put this in perspective, these numbers are more than the entire population of countries like France, Italy and the United Kingdom. In terms of

demographics almost 35% of Indians are younger than 15 years of age, whilst 18% fall within the age group of 15-24. The median age in India is 24 years, which makes it one of the youngest populations in the world. This in itself throws up huge challenges in terms of demands on the education and employment systems.

Higher Education System in India

4. While the prevalent higher education system in the country in the area of general education remains affordable through a large number of publicly funded institutions, professional education is gradually becoming expensive and private professional education is almost unaffordable for the common citizen. There is a great demand – supply mismatch as the economy needs much more ‘skilled’ workforce as also the managers and entrepreneurs than that is produced annually. The situation appears grimmer when one looks at the quality of product. Recent studies by FICCI and NASSCOM reveal that only 25% of the graduates passing out from technical institutions in the country are employable. This is not only about soft skills, but about practical hard skills also. One may dispute the methodology and findings of these studies on technical grounds but it surely reflects the perception of the employer and also of the general masses. Contemporary institutions of higher learning remain almost disconnected with the requirements of the workplace. It is also neutral to the cultural heritage of the country, be it the art, craft, handicraft, music, architecture or any such thing, which deserves proper preservation and promotion through educational system with income assurance. Therefore, the curricula being taught in the universities/ institutions today need to be modified suitably and updated regularly in consultation with the industry, business and the service sectors as well as the active social-cultural organisations. This calls for greater interaction between the institutions, industry and society.

5. The traditional higher education system in the country is rigid in terms of duration of courses, teaching-learning timings, place of study and choice of subjects. If a student pursuing three year degree course, for any reason, has to leave the course for good just before completing it, he has to go empty-handed. There is a genuine need for a provision to acknowledge and certify the knowledge and skills available with a person and their up-gradation to a certifiable level, which is acceptable nationally. Skill based short duration courses are more useful for the rural learners looking for employment or self-employment or better employment locally but they are not avail in the formal system. Courses available in the market are not credible or fully acceptable to the employers. Such courses would also be enriching for those who are in employment or seeking self-fulfilment.

6. Given the present economy of the country where a large proportion of the workforce is either self employed or employed in the informal sector, it is all the more important to provide such courses in the locality at any stage of life irrespective of qualification or background. This calls for a flexible and open system, of course, within the broad framework of higher education system of the country in

which there is value-added multiple entry and exit option available to the learners. The choice of vertical mobility in higher education or horizontal mobility into the employment sector should remain open and rest entirely with the learner. Even the option of returning to college after years of being employed, either to sharpen existing skills or to learn new skills, as per the demand of the work place or to move to higher education, should be made possible. Unless we incorporate these features in our higher education system, we will not succeed in making it relevant for the people, the economy and the society at large.

Towards solution

7. The strength of a country's economy is inextricably linked to the strength of its education system, which trains a workforce that is skilled, adaptable, creative and equipped to compete in the marketplace. The commitment of the Government of India to integrate skill development in the higher education system with flexible learning formats is reflected in its initiative to prepare a National Vocational Education Qualifications Framework (NVEQF) for standardization and thus, wider acceptance of the skill oriented courses amongst the employers. Community Colleges across the world have been working towards these goals besides providing opportunity for vertical mobility and life long learning. Therefore, an idea to establish 100 Colleges on pilot basis on the pattern of Community Colleges of the world was shared in the State Education Ministers' Conference held on 22nd February 2012 where the Conference unanimously endorsed the proposal and decided to constitute a Committee of Education Ministers to develop this concept taking into account the Indian context and also suggest a framework of the Scheme so that 100 Community Colleges are launched in the academic session beginning the year 2013. Accordingly, the Government of India vide its letter No. 5-1/2012/DL dated 30.03.2012 constituted a Committee of State Education Ministers as under:

- i) Ms. Archana Chitnis, Minister of School Education, Madhya Pradesh -- Chairperson
- ii) Sh. Brij Mohan Agrawal, Minister of Education, Chhattisgarh -- Member
- iii) Dr. H B Sarma, Minister of Education, Assam -- Member
- iv) Sh. P K Shahi, Minister of Education, Bihar -- Member
- v) Sh. Daya Ram Parmar, Minister of Higher Education, Rajasthan -- Member
- vi) Sh. Abdul Gani Malik, Minister of Higher Education, J& K -- Member
- vii) Sh. P Palaniappan, Minister of Higher Education, Tamil Nadu -- Member
- viii) Sh. Rajesh A Tope, Minister of Higher Education, Maharashtra -- Member
- ix) Sh. Sikander Singh Malooka, Minister of Education, Punjab -- Member

8. Sh. Anant Kumar Singh, Joint Secretary (CU & L), MHRD is the Convener of this Committee. The Committee, besides holding extensive discussions with the managers of the existing Community Colleges in India, has also visited a few Community Colleges in 3 States of USA viz., Maryland, Virginia and Illinois and attended the annual convention of the American Association of Community Colleges (AACCC) to get a 'first-hand' experience.

Features of Community Colleges

9. Skill development has been an integral part of education system worldwide be it USA, Germany, Canada, UK, Japan, China and a host of other countries. Somewhere skill development starts at school level while at other places, it starts at College level. They are known by different names in different countries. More known amongst them are the Community Colleges, which are in existence in USA for about a century. These colleges provide education above the secondary level and below the degree level with appropriate skills keeping in view the needs of local industry and community there by leading to gainful employment and option for horizontal and vertical mobility. While vertical mobility facilitates movement to higher education and research, horizontal mobility creates opportunity for entry into the employment market with appropriate skills. There is also flexibility for further skill development. There is no age barrier for entry to a course, thus it also meets the life-long learning needs of the community. These Colleges are also engaged in Adult Education and Developmental Studies for academically weaker students. Community Colleges allow Dual / Concurrent Enrollment to facilitate High school students to take courses in Community Colleges to shorten the time and lessen the costs to get Associate degree and later full degree.

10. It is a system created for addressing the learning needs of the community at low and affordable cost without compromising the quality. In USA, the cost of tuition to the student in Community Colleges is about one-third the cost in regular undergraduate degree colleges. One third of the funding for running the community college comes from Student fees. The Governments at Federal, State, Local levels contribute a major share towards meeting the budgetary requirements of these Community Colleges. In addition, endowments from corporate sector, foundations, and money earned from training programs, etc. also contribute in meeting the financial requirements of the Community Colleges. Community Colleges receive grant from the Government only when it is able to maintain A grade in accreditation.

11. The Community Colleges keep the community engaged with the affairs of the Colleges in several formal and informal ways. Community is represented on the academic and administrative bodies of these Colleges. Community Colleges often have multiple campuses underlying the principle to keep the learning facility at not more than 30 minutes drive from any point, thereby making education accessible and affordable. These Colleges give preference for admission to the local community, particularly, the marginalized sections of the population that include minorities (non-white race/ethnicity), uneducated (first-generation degree seekers), backward areas (domicile) and low-income (Pell grant status). Strong college-industry interaction leads to regular updating of the curricula. Skill-based courses have essentially 'hands on' practice and experience.

Recommendations

12. The Community College is a concept apparently working well in countries like USA for about last 50 years but all its features cannot be imported to India due to the socio-economic and socio-cultural differences that the two countries have in spite of several similarities. Therefore, the model of Colleges the Committee is going to recommend need not be called the Community College. They should be given a suitable indigenous name, which represents the character of these Colleges aptly and meets the contemporary needs of the society and the nation. Having regard to the problems currently ailing our higher education system and the established beneficial features of the American Community Colleges, the Committee feels that the following model of college education in India would address the issues flagged above and meet the requirements and thus it recommends:-

- (i) These Colleges should offer courses that are a mix of knowledge and skill components. The curriculum to be transacted under the present 3-year Honours Degree Course would be broken into modules/credits specifying the total number of credits required for acquiring a Degree. As the degree is awarded in recognition of a level of knowledge in a subject, the University will also prescribe the number of credits out of the total credits to be acquired for the award of degree in a subject. Similarly, the number of credits required in a subject to get an Honours degree in that subject will also be prescribed. The skill component of the curriculum will draw from the credit framework prepared under the National Occupational Standards (NOS) for the concerned sectors of the NVEQF. Vocational learning outcome of these courses would essentially conform to the NVEQF framework while standards of general education would conform to the University norms. Award of degree will depend solely on acquisition of credits and not on the duration of time spent in pursuing the course. In this system, the learner will have the facility to learn at his /her own pace – an average student will acquire the degree in the stipulated 3 years period while an extraordinary student will be facilitated to acquire it earlier.
- (ii) These Colleges will also specify the credit requirements for awarding other qualifications, viz. Certificate, Diploma, Advanced Diploma / Associate Degree, etc., so that learners joining the College after Class 12th have option to exit the College at convenience with some qualification in hand. Qualifications so specified shall have to conform to the levels prescribed in the NVEQF in so far as skills- learning is concerned. All these courses will have to dovetail appropriately with the levels of NVEQF so that mobility between general and vocational education is facilitated by bridging the credit gap.

- (iii) Such Colleges will also offer barrier free short-term certificate courses of various durations to the learners, in the sense that no formal qualification would be required to join such courses. It will be predominantly skills-based and will particularly take care of the workforce and life-long learning needs of the locality. Learning outcome of these courses would essentially have to conform to the NVEQF framework. In our country, forestry, agriculture, and allied and other traditional skill sectors are largely served by the unskilled or semi-skilled workforce. Special focus on skill development of this workforce through these colleges would not only boost the growth of economy by increasing their productivity but also lead to distributive justice and equity through increased income of this workforce, which is very large in number.
- (iv) These Colleges should offer courses for preservation and up-gradation of traditional skills available with the people by virtue of their profession or geographical location or caste. Such traditional skills should be recognized and certified appropriately. Courses should be designed to upgrade the traditionally available skills to a certifiable level so that the certified skills of the learner are acceptable nationally. These Colleges should also act as catalyst centres for developing and propagating the traditional skills of the community on commercially viable basis.
- (v) Besides preparing skilled workforce for the market, these Colleges should pay equal attention to the development of entrepreneurship in the community. Towards this end, they should offer management related courses of different durations also.
- (vi) All the Courses offered by these Colleges will be modular and credit-based. Banking of credits earned would be permitted. The learner will have the option to exit after completing certain credit points of a course and rejoin the course at his convenience later with full protection of the credit already earned by him. On accumulation of prescribed credit points, appropriate qualification, viz. Certificate/ Diploma / Advanced Diploma / Degree with or without Honours will be awarded by the College / University.
- (vii) Curriculum for these credit-based modular courses would be developed by the Board of Studies of these Colleges in accordance with the credit framework keeping in view the local skill requirements. Board of Studies would have representatives from the College, University to which the College is affiliated, relevant industries including business, service, agriculture and allied sectors, their associations by whatever names they are known, Agriculture University / Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), State Council of Vocational Training (SCVT) and the State Board/Council/Directorate of

Technical Education and the relevant professional bodies / guilds at State and National level.

- (viii) Since these Colleges are meant to serve the need of the Community, the aspiring learners from the locality will be given suitable weightage in registration. If the number of registered learners is more than the seats available, admission will be granted on '*first come first served*' basis. Curriculum, teaching-learning material, etc., should be developed in local language and context.
- (ix) Relevancy of technical knowledge, especially in the age of rapid technological obsolescence, is important and therefore, monitoring, evaluation and updating of the curriculum needs to be done periodically in consultation with all stakeholders, particularly the industry including business and service sectors keeping in view their requirements and changes in NOS. It should be a continuous and dynamic process in-built into the system.
- (x) The skill aspect of the curriculum would have to be transacted in 'face-to-face' mode only whereas the general aspect of the curriculum may be in any mode without compromising on quality. Therefore, every such College needs to have adequate laboratory/workshop facilities for '*hands on*' practice.
- (xi) In order to successfully transact the curriculum and to ensure acquisition of requisite skill by the learners, these Colleges would require qualified teachers/instructors in adequate numbers. Maintaining permanent faculty for all subjects/courses could be financially unviable for the Colleges. Therefore, as per the most prevalent international practice, the Colleges should maintain only the core faculty on permanent basis and remaining should be drawn as part- time guest faculty from the industry or the open market.
- (xii) Like the curriculum, the standards of knowledge and skills of the teachers/instructors also need continuous updating through appropriate training and exposure programmes in collaboration with the University, Agriculture University, Institutions of Technical Education, industry, business and service sectors.
- (xiii) Accreditation should be made mandatory for these Colleges. Separate accreditation of physical infrastructure, faculty and pedagogy, and evaluation mechanism, should be done to ensure that these Colleges have the necessary wherewithal for enjoying the autonomous status. A College with 'A' Grading should only be accorded the 'autonomous' status by the State/UT. NAAC / NBA will arrange for accreditation of these Colleges on priority basis.

- (xiv) These Colleges should have full functional autonomy in respect of designing curriculum, its transaction, evaluation, declaration of result, etc. and its Board of Management should also include representatives of affiliating University, Agriculture University, relevant Industries including Business, Service, Agriculture and Allied sectors, their Associations / Professional Guilds by whatever names they are known, Local Bodies and State Government. Once the Community Colleges become fully functional, they should be able to stand on their own but until then, there is a need for support from the Central/State Governments and the Regulatory Authorities.

- (xv) In order to facilitate this hand holding, the States/UTs should constitute a broad based State Level Steering Committee (SLSC) under the Chairpersonship of the Chief Secretary and having representation from all stakeholders, viz. The Universities / Colleges, State Departments of Agriculture, Industry, Labour, Finance, Higher/Technical Education and other course related Departments, Association of industries, business and service sectors, State Directorate/ Board / Council of Technical Education etc., to co-ordinate between various departments / agencies to facilitate the activities of the College to get them completed in time.

- (xvi) The Central Government should also constitute a National Level Monitoring Committee (NLMC) having representation from all stakeholders to supervise and monitor the implementation of the scheme.

- (xvii) The cost of establishing these Colleges in the public sector shall be borne by the Centre and the State/UT Governments on sharing basis. However, having regard to the character of the Community Colleges and their linkages to the industries including business and service sectors, it would be desirable to encourage funding in Public-Private-Partnership mode for establishing these Colleges.

- (xviii) The success and acceptability of these Colleges will come through participation of the community-based stakeholders and nearly assured employment prospects. Employers will be inclined to employ the product of these Colleges only when they are assured of the level of skills acquired by the learners. Therefore, a rigorous and credible system of evaluation and certification in consultation with the industry, including business and service sectors needs to be put in place in these Colleges.

- (xix) The proposed model for these Colleges seeks to address the need of relevancy of higher education in the life of learners, provide skilled workforce, managers and entrepreneurs to the economy and fulfill the urge of life-long learning in an affordable and flexible manner. Ideally, all the existing, about 31,000 colleges of the country should be like this. But, due to several reasons, particularly, the mindset of the managers of this system, paucity of qualified teachers / trainers, infrastructure and financial resources, it will take time to effect the changes in all these Colleges to enable them to meet the challenges being faced by the higher education system today. Therefore, it will be advisable to start 100 Community Colleges across the country on pilot basis.
- (xx) In future, all colleges in the public and the private sector should be granted affiliation by the universities only when they conform to this pattern of skills-integrated higher education with credit-based modules and flexible courses. In order to encourage such colleges, governments should fund them on the basis of student-strength provided they maintain their 'A' grade of accreditation.
- (xxi) It will take a few years to start 100 such Colleges from their own buildings with all requisite infrastructure. Due to paucity to time, it would be desirable that 100 existing Colleges / State Polytechnics may be transformed on the above pattern into these Colleges. If such transformation is not possible due to some local constraints, it may be started in the same College with a separate Governing Board. Industry would be approached for making available their facilities for '*hands on*' practical training till these Colleges are able to develop their own laboratories and workshops.
- (xxii) These 100 Colleges would be distributed amongst the States/UTs on the basis of population, subject to each one of them getting at least one such College. However, the entitlement of 11 sparsely populated hilly states would be double their population-based calculation. As these Colleges have to have close association with the Industry including business and service sectors at every stage, viz., identification of courses, learning needs and trainers, transaction of syllabus, evaluation, etc., it will be advisable for the States/ UTs to locate these institutions preferably near industry-clusters. It will be an added advantage if the identified College is also an autonomous college so that it has the authority to design the curriculum, hold the examination and declare the results.
- (xxiii) The State/UT Governments will have to draw up a schedule for all activities relating to making 100 such Colleges operational from the academic session 2013. This includes identification of College, partner industry including business and service sectors, courses to be offered and qualified

teachers/instructors, development of curriculum, training teachers / instructors, identification of laboratories/workshops, preparation of budget, accreditation of courses offered by these Colleges, etc. They should also identify officials who will be responsible for performing these duties in a time-bound manner.

- (xxiv) As the pilot Colleges are to start from an existing College, the fund requirement will be limited to provision for additional faculty, both full time and part-time, development of curriculum, laboratory/workshop facilities and day-to-day consumption expenditure. The States should endeavour to involve the industry in the development of laboratories/workshops and making available part-time faculties. This is only suggestive. The State can evolve different modes of Public-Private-Partnership for establishing these Colleges. The expenditure, if any, to be borne on establishing these Colleges from the public exchequer, shall be on sharing basis, between the Centre and the State / UT concerned in the proportion of 90:10 at pilot stage.
- (xxv) The Central Government, in collaboration with the State / UT Governments should organise regional workshops, national and international seminars to facilitate interaction between the managers of the proposed Colleges, including teachers / trainers on the one hand and the regulatory authorities, industries, national and international experts in this field on the other hand. There should be a strong monitoring mechanism at the National and State level to guide, supervise and monitor the implementation of the scheme at the ground level.
- (xxvi) The Committee feels that legislation would be a potent instrument for implementing the above concept effectively. Government of India may develop a model legislation to enable States/ UTs to adopt / adapt it according to the needs of the States / UTs.
