

COMMUNITY COLLEGES IN INDIA NEW INITIATIVES FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

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Abstract: India is a country of diversities. We have institutions like IIMs, IITs, Indian Institute of Science, ISRO, PRL, ICSSR, NITTTRs etc. which give us international pride. On the other hand we have primary/elementary schools in the rural sectors have very poor resources like infrastructure facilities, Human resources, Also in India our literacy rate is not 100% and school dropouts ratio is very high.

The conventional system of education have not enough scope for four key pillars of learning that recommended by the UNESCO Commission for the nature of education in the 21st century, held in Paris in 1996. These key pillars are learning to know, learning to be, learning to do, learning to live together.

Through the conventional system lot of knowledge gets spread but a student generally does not learn to apply the acquired knowledge in the real life condition and field practices. The knowledge acquired becomes largely theoretical and cannot be put to effective use for the society and industries. If we will fulfill the skill gap for industries demands by some flexible education schemes, which will help us for better employment/ self-employment in various section of society.

Community College is an initiative in that direction. It has the capability to provide a parallel education system which aims to empower individuals through appropriate skills development leading to gainful employment in association with the local industry/employer and the community. It helps in achieving skills for employment / self-employment to the unprivileged sections of the society

I. INTRODUCTION

India is a vast country with a population of more than 1.32 billion. 75% of India's population lives in about six lacs villages. There is a visible difference in rural and urban, rich and poor, highly educated and lesser educated, forward and backward areas. In India resourceful people, particularly those living in urban areas, have had access to better education and professional training, but vast majority of those who live in rural areas and slums are lesser educated and they could not get undergo any technical, professional and vocational training. In fact, for most of such people, quality education and higher technical and professional education is very costly and unaffordable.

In terms of career options, such lesser educated and not so fortunate people tend to work in low paid unorganized sector. Per person productivity of such persons works out

to be a small fraction of productivity of those who work in organized sector of Indian economy. In an increasingly competitive economic environment of our country, the unorganized sector, which is so important for the country, needs to increase the productivity of its human resource for its survival and growth.

Other major problem of the Indian informal sector is that it cannot afford employing highly educated and professionally trained manpower which usually aspires for highly challenging, rewarding and satisfying career. The only option available before the Indian informal sector is to depend upon comparatively low paid manpower trained through non formal system of skill development like vocational training.

There is, therefore, an urgent need to train millions of persons every year through a country wide network of non-formal skill development. Such non-formal skill training should attract beneficiaries from all cross-sections of Indian society through community college system.

II. THE CONCEPT OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE

The Community College is an effective alternative system of education. In India these are very essential for a betterment and empowerment of the poor and the deprived section of society. Community colleges can help us for needful skills development for higher employment in association with the local industry, society and other bodies like NGO . That can provide skills for employment and self-employment of the above sections of the society. The Community College is a new innovative system for parallel alternative educational.

It gives a second chance to those who have dropped out of school. It is empowerment through skills development for all section of community. In India, exclusion takes place on account of two reasons. One is social exclusion on the basis of caste.

The benefit of Community College system are access to all group of society, flexibility in curriculum and teaching methodology, cost effectiveness and equal opportunity in association with industrial, commercial and service sectors of the local area and according to the social needs and issues of the local community and job placement within the local area, promotion of self-employment and small business development, declaration of competence and eligibility for employment.

III. COMMUNITY COLLEGE - NEED OF THE NATION:

Community College responds to the Problems of

- 3.1. High School Dropouts
- 3.2. Mismatch between education and employment
- 3.3. Bridging the Skill Gap
- 3.4. Elimination of Poverty

3.1 High School Dropouts

In India more than 200 million students enroll in Class one in each year, but only 20 million of these are able to finish Class 12. out of them 90% of the students drop out at different stages before Class 12, and 63% of the students drop out before reaching Class 10th, so that 67% of the existing work force is either illiterate or literate up to primary level of education . From these statistics, we can see that roughly, about 50 % of students drop out at every stage, in the school. So there is a problem of those youth who dropout from the educational system between the age group 11 -17 years.

3.2 Mismatch between education and employment

Every year millions of graduates are passed from various university, who do not have the specific skill sets required by the market and industries. If this trend continues, it would effect our economic and social growth in the long run. To change this situation, first we need to change our mindset. In India, people are obsessed with attaining a graduation degree and generally look down upon vocational education. This has resulted in a situation, where on the one hand there are lot of unemployed graduates and on the other hand there is a huge shortage of skilled workers, such as plumbers, electricians, turner, fitter, welder etc.

There is a great need for shorter vocational training programmes that job seekers can take on their own time and at their own pace and at relatively low cost. In addition there is also need for a wide range of vocational courses for those who are already employed but seek to enhance or upgrade their skills to keep pace with changing needs and to further their career opportunities. The context of our discussion of the Community College System as an educational alternative is not only for the unemployed but also the unemployability that is prevalent among the university graduates.

3.3 Bridging the Skill Gap

There is need for skilling and reskilling the persons entering the labour force to harness the demographic dividend of India. While the enrolment in technical higher education has grown, the employers continue to complain about non availability of requisite number of skilled persons. This challenge needs to be addressed at the all India as well as the state level in a mission mode manner, as otherwise the benefits of demographic dividend would be lost. The skill enhancement also leads to increased wages for the people and a positive growth outcome for the economy at large. Boston Consultancy Group's study in 2007 had clearly indicated that by 2020 while India will have surplus of 56 million working people, the rest of the world will encounter a shortage of 47 million working people. However, skilling this large and growing young population from an exceedingly small base would be a big challenge for India.

India will have about 63 per cent of its population in the working age group by 2022. China's demographic dividend would start tapering off by 2015, but India would continue to enjoy it till 2040. India needs to provide skills and training to its young workforce if this window of opportunity is not to be lost. However, the availability of demographic dividend varies across the country with wide variation in Northern and Southern states. This may be possible through Community College System providing skill to youth.

3.4 Elimination of Poverty

In India main cause of poverty is illiteracy. India is a rural and agricultural based country and villages are not yet developed in India; especially women are unable to get education. Second main cause of poverty is the population which is increasing day by day and India ranks on second number in this line. China has world's highest population but they are now putting a check on the growing population and also, their land area is also very huge as compared to India. In a poor nation, middle class is also unable to fulfill all their requirements as compared to high society.

IV. THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM IN INDIA:

The Community College movement started in 1996 at Chennai with the establishment of Madras Community College. It was decided initially to focus on one year diploma programme in the community college system. The concept was promoted as an alternative system of education based on inspiration and model of US Community Colleges. The Community College system aims at empowering the marginalized and deprived sections of the society. It has become a National phenomenon with the clear articulation of Urban, Rural, Tribal, and Women

Community Colleges.

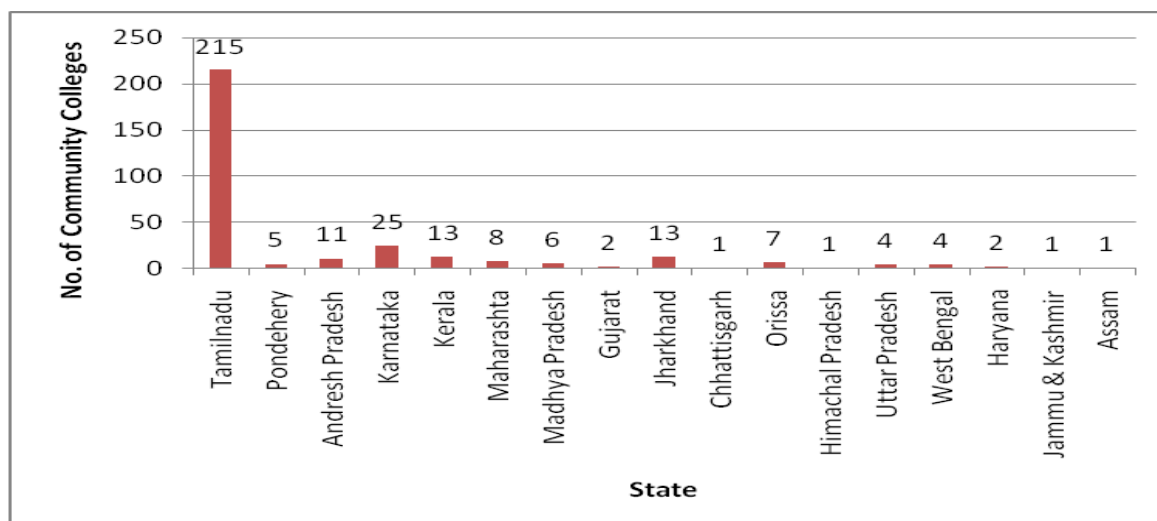
It has spread its wings to 18 states of India with 319 Community Colleges associating with Indian Centre for Research and Development of Community Education (ICRDCE), which is a pioneering institute in developing the concept and helping in the establishment and monitoring of Community Colleges.

4.1 The Growth of the Community College Movement in India

State wise list of Community Colleges (Table 1)

Sr. No	State	No. of Community Colleges	Sr. No	State	No. of Community Colleges
1	Tamilnadu	215	10	Chhattisgarh	01
2	Pondehery	05	11	Orissa	07
3	Andresh Pradesh	11	12	Himachal Pradesh	01
4	Karnataka	25	13	Uttar Pradesh	04
5	Kerala	13	14	West Bengal	04
6	Maharashta	08	15	Haryana	02
7	Madhya Pradesh	06	16	Jammu & Kashmir	01
8	Gujarat	02	17	Assam	01
9	Jharkhand	13			
TOTAL:					319

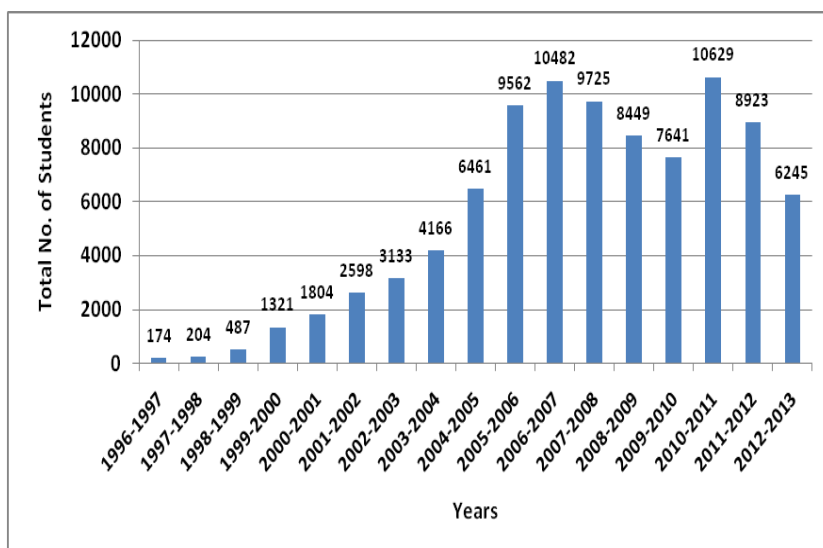
Source: ICRDCE, Chennai



Source: ICRDCE, Chennai

Year wise Students entry(Table 2):

Sr. no	Years	Total No. of Students
1	1996-1997	174
2	1997-1998	204
3	1998-1999	487
4	1999-2000	1321
5	2000-2001	1804
6	2001-2002	2598
7	2002-2003	3133
8	2003-2004	4166
9	2004-2005	6461
10	2005-2006	9562
11	2006-2007	10482
12	2007-2008	9725
13	2008-2009	8449
14	2009-2010	7641
15	2010-2011	10629
16	2011-2012	8923
17	2012-2013	6245
	TOTAL:	92,004



Source: ICRDCE, Chennai

v. MAJOR ADVANTAGES OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM:

- 1) Low cost education: almost all community colleges are run by state and heavily subsidized to offer college level education at a very low cost.
- 2) Lower academic standards: the lighter work load and less rigorous course material makes higher education available to many who could not survive in the highly competitive climate.
- 3) Vocationalisation: the offering of work-oriented need based courses like mobile repairing. Computer Hardware and networking, welding & fabrication, plumbing ,electrician ,CNC operator etc. with hands on experience to the students.
- 4) Accessibility: since students may get admission in any trade of his/her interested field at full/part time. It makes higher education available to the full time worker and even the housewife who cannot afford to attend college full time, they can take advantage of part time trade.
- 5) Community college system should provide vertical mobility towards higher education.

VI. SEVEN STAGES OF PREPARATION:

The establishment of a Community College is a careful process of Planning and Implementation. The stages given below have been gone through by the Community Colleges.

6.1 Need Analysis:

Need Analysis be done by survey of local areas. Need Analysis is the backbone of the Community College. The Community College is established with good foundation of the thorough Need Analysis of the Employment and Self- Employment Opportunities in the Local Area.

6.2 Curriculum Development – DACUM Process:

Curriculum should be base on need survey and demand of various, stake holders & society. There has been a lot of hard work required in discovering the relevant and the needed curriculum to be given to the students of the Community College. So, what is offered as the Curriculum taught in the Community Colleges is a result of the collective search and it is based on the actual teaching experience of many of the Community College Teachers. The Curriculum of a Community College specially design for a Job oriented programmes.

6.2.1 Following points keep in mind for designing Curriculum

- 1) The College could conduct classes from the minimum of Three Hours (for part timers) to maximum of Six Hours per day for full time students depending on learning level of target groups in the local areas.
- 2) The curriculum for every Job-Oriented Programme should be designed in collaboration with the practitioners of the Industry / Commerce / Agriculture People / Rural Sectors / Society peoples.
- 3) The college should help the students to attain their Entry-Level Skills required for the Job-Oriented Programmes and industry oriented program.
- 4) For the Certificate Courses, the Life Skills should be compulsory and the duration of the Work skill course could be modified according to the job requirements.
- 5) For all the students of the Community College whatever might be their specialized programmes, Courses on Life Skills should be mandatory.
- 6) Maximum 25 to 30 students in one beach for skills – development in specific Job-Oriented Programmes is advisable.
- 7) The presence Job Placement Cell and Placement Officer is a must in every Community College for effective industrial training and subsequent Job Placement requirements and for continues guidance and counseling of the students

Lifelong Skills, Communication Skills, Basic Computer Applications and Work Skills programme in the Community Colleges for the core subjects of the Curriculum.

6.3 Evaluation and Assessment of Skills

- 1) The Evaluation and Assessment of the Skills of the students of the Community College is completely internal and done by the Community College with the help of technical and field experts. The evaluation is aimed at the testing of the skills rather than the absorption of information. The evaluation is jointly done by the Life Skill Instructor, Work Skills Instructor, Industrial Supervisor supplemented by the self-assessment of the student of the Community College, thus making the evaluation comprehensive and purposeful, determining the attainment of skills. The knowledge and skills components should be given equal weightage. This evaluation is to be continuous, transparent and should contain checks and balances within the system to ensure credibility.
- 2) The Diploma or the certificate is signed by the Director of the college as well as the industrial Partner who has trained the students in the particular fields of specialization in industry.

6.4 Preparation for Employment

The students of the Community Colleges are trained to prepare a bio-data to attend the interview for Job Placement.

6.5 Industrial Partnership

The Community College cannot succeed without the active participation and collaboration of the industrial, rural, agricultural, commercial and service organizations of the locality. The above sectors come to assist the Community College in the following five ways.

- 1) Designing the curriculum for various job oriented and need base courses.
- 2) Serving as members of the advisory board by industrial experts.
- 3) Being part time instructors from industries for teaching and assessment in the College.
- 4) On the job training for the students in the work place of industries.
- 5) Job placement for students who have been trained in the Community Colleges.
- 6) Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) could be signed with the industries for
- 7) A few representatives from the above sectors industrial, commerce and service sectors could also serve as the members of the governing body of the College.
- 8) Industrial Institute partnership Cell (IIP cell) should be established.

6.6 The Administration and Governance of the Community College

The Community College ensures that the participation of the members of the agency that establishes the Community College (Board of Management), Administrators, Representatives of the faculty of the Community College, Industrial Partners, Community Leaders, Consultants to the Community College and Representatives nominated by the Government. The authorities of the College make sure of the proper management of Life Skills, Work Skills, Placement for Training, Financial and General administrative matters and also the needed infrastructural facilities necessary for training.

6.7 Recognition and Accreditation

The Community College System has been working successfully with 70% Job Placement without getting Recognition from any Approved Educational Bodies of the Country. However most of the Community Colleges felt there is the need for recognition from the State and Central Governments to facilitate the horizontal mobility and the vertical mobility of the students of the Community College. The issue of Accreditation was examined closely by the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS), New Delhi at the direction of the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), Government of India, New Delhi. The NIOS has given accreditation so far to 234 in 2009 Community Colleges in India. The MCRDCE is also trying its best to workout Credit Transfer with the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), New Delhi for Vertical Mobility.

VII. SUGGESTIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS TO THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE MOVEMENT REQUIRED IN INDIA

- 1) The problem of school dropouts can be handled by the Community Colleges by providing them multi –skills since they already have the experience – 8th Passed and below 10th . These students can be given certificate courses and better employment can be provided to them.

- 2) Various Programme of Technical Vocational Training and Educational (TVT &E) can easily be implemented by the Community Colleges.
- 3) Lack of recognition has been the major problem faced by students passed out from the Community Colleges. Recognition by the Ministry of Human Resources Development, New Delhi and the Directorate of Employment and training by the respective State governments will enhance the diploma given by the Community Colleges for national and regional acceptance. It will also ensure the horizontal mobility of the students in terms of getting employment all over the country.
- 4) There should be a chance for vertical mobility The Vertical mobility of going for further education in the respective trades could be ensured by the National Qualification framework through credit transfer especially in the Open Universities of the Country like Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU).
- 5) The National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) has accredited 18 Community Colleges. Many more colleges would be accredited in the near future for the Vocational courses already offered by NIOS Efforts to be made to get the New courses designed according to the local needs and conducted by the Community Colleges to be accredited by NIOS.
- 6) The model of the Community College system could be replicated all over the country even a college in 600 districts of the country.
 - a. It is aiming at the employability of the students trained in college.
 - b. It is evolving a system to declare the competency level and duly certify the same.
 - c. It is promoting strong Industry – Institutional linkage and ties. It involves the Industry to articulate the skills it wants and works in close collaboration with the industries, to make the individuals skill oriented that is needed by the employer.
 - d. It emphasizes the teaching of life skills, communication skills and English to the students of the college.
 - e. The Community College System certainly reduces the burden on higher education.
 - f. It is evolving a system of evaluation and assessment of skills, which are personal, social, language, communication, work and creativity.
- 7) The important problem, the Community Colleges are facing today is the financial viability. The fees collected from the students are very low (an average fee of Rs. 2500-3000) to make the system cost effective and reachable to the poor and the most disadvantaged. Hence it is recommended that the Central and State Governments could offer to the students from the socially, economically, educationally backward groups scholarships and stipends –Rs 3000 by way of meeting the training cost of per student per year which will help the Community Colleges to strengthen the System.
- 8) Concept of the Community Colleges are predominant in South India, the concept of Community College has to be propagated through regional workshops especially in the northern states of India in particular in Bihar, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, West Bengal and other north eastern states.
- 9) These workshops can be conducted to popularize the Concept among service minded organizations and NGOs with the help of the respected state Government.
- 10) The various components of the Life Skills Programme such as Life Coping Skills, personality development, Communication Skills, English, Basic Computing Skills preparation for employment could be included in the whole stream of Vocational

Education with the expertise of the Community Colleges and by training teachers of Vocational Schools. There is a need to promote active industrial partnership with agencies like the Indian Chamber of Commerce, Confederation of Indian Industries (CIIA) etc in order to stabilize the internship and job placement of the students.

- 11) Life Skills could be introduced as an integral component to the Arts and Science college students to enhance their employability of students.
- 12) This movement has been a non-governmental initiative. Hence the governments could provide external support through recognition and awarding of scholarship and stipends to the deserving students. This help could come from the following departments of the government.
 - a) Rural Development Department
 - b) Social Welfare Department
 - c) Health Department
 - d) Women Welfare/Empowerment Department
 - e) Youth Welfare and Sports Department
 - f) Funds of the Special Component Plan Programmes for the welfare of the SC/ST community.
- 13) Adequate infrastructure facilities are required in Community Colleges for Vocational Trade activities. It is essential that adequate infrastructure particularly for hands on training is to be considerably strengthen. While some support could come through Community Contribution and fees collected from the Students. The Government should also contribute liberally towards equipments, raw materials and supporting structures.

VIII. CONCLUSION:

The Community College is an alternative system of education, aimed to helping the poor-urban, rural and tribal, women and deprived sections of the community to find gainful employment in collaboration with the local industry and the community. The system is of the community, for the community and by the community to produce responsible citizens. The Community college promotes job-oriented, work related, skill based and life coping education. A community college is a comprehensive institution of higher education, offering educational programs at post-secondary school level, which includes courses in occupational and technical fields and continuing education, to meet the work fore needs of the region in which the college is location and also offering “bridge” courses. The Community College is the need of the hour because it’s helps to India transition from a developing to a developed nation. It can only be made possible through the concentrated efforts of all stakeholders-unified in the common desire of promoting the cause of development.

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