

Skill based Programs in Higher Education in Manipur: Prospects and Problems

Dr Md Rahejuddin Sheikh

Director, DDU- KAUSHAL Kendra, Dhanamanjuri Community College, Imphal, Manipur, India

E-mail: mrsheikhshamu@gmail.com

Abstract

Skill development programs are taken up nationwide with an objective to reduce the unemployment problems in the Country. Community Colleges, Bachelor of Vocation (B. Voc.) Colleges and Knowledge Acquisition and Upgradation of Skilled Human Abilities and Livelihood (KAUSHAL) Kendras are being implemented under the University Grants Commission (UGC). However, the responses from among the youths, the modalities of implementation, the alignment of the syllabi and curricula with the National Occupational Standards (NOS), adoption of Choice Based Credit System and Credit Transfer System, choice of trades, unavailability of the skilled trainers, industry linkages and placement are the main issues in this regard. In this paper we discuss the issues, responses, grievances and prospects while implementing the scheme of skill development programs in Manipur with focused suggestions to achieve the envisioned goals.

Keywords: National Skill Qualification Framework (NSQF), National Occupational Standards (NOS), Qualification Packs (QP), KAUSHAL

1. Introduction:

Out of 28 lakhs population of Manipur more than 7 lakhs educated youths are now seeking employment with more than 2 lakh girls listed in the employment exchange. Limitations in employment opportunities are mainly due to lack of industries and other private enterprises in the State. Many Manipuri boys and girls have been scrambling for jobs in government offices only. Many of the unemployed youths had gone to other parts of the country seeking employment. There are a large number of Manipuri boys and girls who are working in offices in the big cities in India. At this juncture, the skill development programs implemented under this Government are going to make a boon to the youths in Manipur.

The main objectives to launch the various skill development programs are to create opportunities, space and scope for the development of the talents of the youth and to develop more of those sectors which have already been put under skill development for the last so many years and also to identify new sectors for skill development. This dream would not be complete unless Manipuri youths become well trained in the skill sectors. Manipur stands at the corridor of the proposed Trans-Asian Superhighway. The skills development programs are required to be designed so as to enable our youths to make their skills sale in the international markets.

As far as the innovative ideas in skills are concerned, China is not an exception and Manipur is the State bordering Myanmar to experience the direct impact. Even at the capital city of Imphal people enjoy the benefits of many new products which are imported through Myanmar at the cheapest prices. India needs to make compatible with the fast changing innovations in the world. The community who has to be trained to defend directly the innovation and skills in the international arena is the people of Manipur.

As most of the markets in Myanmar are dominated by the more advanced South Asian Countries including China and Japan, India needs to be more attentive towards improvement of skills among the youths in the north eastern states particularly those in Manipur so that our youth can run ahead in the competition with their counterparts from the South Asian Countries. It, therefore, depends on the modalities of implementation of the skill based programs to enhance the skill capacity of the workforce among the youths in Manipur.

2. Initiatives taken for skills development in Higher Education

The new skill based educational programs are being implemented in the higher education sector under the Community College schemes, B Voc Schemes and KAUSHAL Kendras which are approved under the University Grants Commission, New Delhi.

Sl. No.	Type of Scheme	No of College	No of University
1	Community Colleges	06	01
2	B Voc. Colleges	08	01
3	KAUSHAL Kendras	02	00

Table 1: Number of Higher Educational Institutes approved under various skills development programs

The initiatives for establishment of two Community Colleges in Manipur under the norms of those in the United States was taken up by the State Government through various communications with the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Department of Higher Education, Government of India since the year 2012. Under the policy of setting up of 200 community colleges nationwide, the State has established two Community Colleges with 100 % funding from the Ministry. The State Government, considering the proximity of industry partners which is an essential criterion for implementing the scheme and taking the necessary equity initiatives into considerations, has identified D M College of Science, Imphal and Churachandpur College, Churachandpur to host the two community colleges under the titles **Dhanamanjuri Community College** and **Churachandpur College** respectively. Accordingly, two nodal officers were appointed for looking after the works related to setting up of the two community colleges on pilot basis as well as to look after the charge of the Principals till creation of the posts of regular principals of the colleges. The two colleges were inaugurated at their respective campuses on the 12th and the 13th of June 2014 respectively. The two days created a history in the development of skill based higher education in State.

Healthcare and food are the two sectors introduced in Dhanamanjuri Community College while Automotive and Information Technology sectors were introduced in Churachandpur Community College. Just after the inauguration, many unemployed youth including housewives, staffs in the industry Department and retired persons were seeking admission in the two community colleges. More number of young boys and girls who have completed higher secondary level queued up for admissions in the healthcare sector. The admission processes were carried out as per timeline approved by the State Higher Education Department. The admission was done strictly through various phases of counseling sessions with the participation of the parents and guardians in a series of lectures highlighting the scopes and prospects of the respective trades, options given to the students on priority basis, proximity of industries, availabilities of placements and entrepreneurs etc. Before the release of any grants from the UGC, the two colleges began its academic sessions 2014-15 with effect from the 1st August 2014.

SI No	Name of the College	Sectors	Trades	Levels
1	Dhanamanjuri Community College, Imphal	Healthcare	Medical Laboratory Technician	Advanced Diploma
			Radio Imaging Technician	B Voc & M Voc
		Food	Fruits & Vegetables Technology	Advanced Diploma
		Media & Entertainment	Television and Media Productions	B Voc & M Voc
2	Churachandpur Community College, Churachandpur	IT	Computer Hardware & software Technology	Advanced Diploma
		Automotive	Automotive Technology	Advanced Diploma

Table 2: Status of the two community colleges established under the State Government initiatives in Manipur.

In addition to the status as given in table 2, there are also five other community colleges approved under the UGC scheme but not recognized as established under the initiatives of the State Higher Education Department, Government of Manipur. The other five colleges are S K Women’s College, Waikhom Mani Girls College, C I College, Manipur University and Pettigrew College.

3. Responses

The students’ response in respect of the two community colleges established under the State Higher Education Department, Government of Manipur is shown in the following figures. The reasons for huge response in the healthcare sector indicate that the young boys and girls are running after the health professions. More than 70% of the students who passed class higher secondary examinations like to apply for Medical Entrance Examinations to go for MBBS/BDS courses. Those who could not get through the medical entrance examinations after three four attempts would like to go for allied professions such as Medical Laboratory Technicians, Nurses, Radiology and Imaging Technicians, Diabetes Educators, Pre-hospital Technology, Physiotherapy, AYUSH and other allied courses in the healthcare sector. Community

Colleges having trades in the healthcare sector have provided a suitable platform for those students who like to study in any of the suitable courses in the healthcare sector.

SI no	Trades	No. of applicants			Enrollment		
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1	Medical Lab Technology	75	134	209	14	36	50
2	Food technology	52	46	98	28	22	50
3	Radio imaging technology	62	102	164	32	18	50
4	Media technology	28	15	43	28	15	43
5	Automotive	65	12	77	41	09	50
6	Computer technology	87	45	132	32	18	50

Table 3: Students’ response and enrolment statistics in respect of the two community colleges established under the Government initiatives for the academic sessions 2015-16

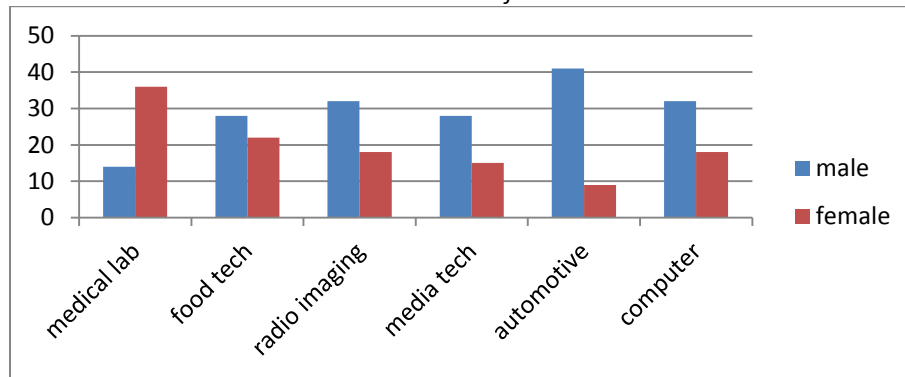


Figure 1: Bar chart showing the enrolment statistics of male and female in respect of the two community colleges established under the Government initiatives

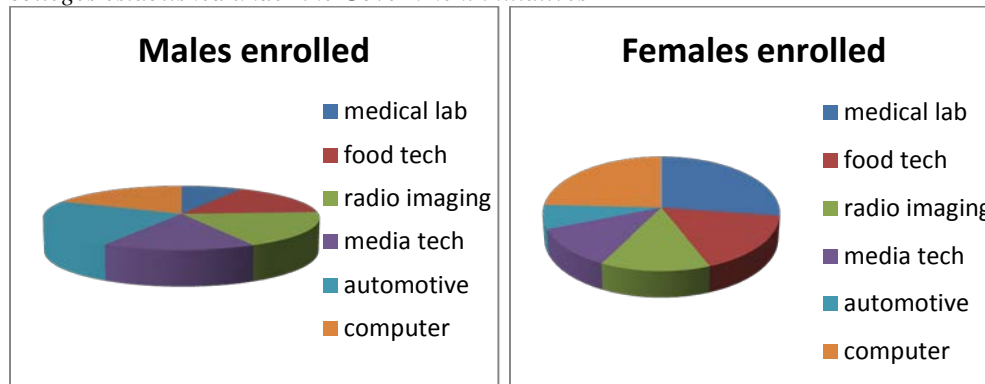


Figure 2: pie chart showing enrollment of males and females in respect of the two community colleges established under the Government initiatives

Again, the response from the girls is far greater than boys in the healthcare sector as compared to other trades. In the food sector, both boys and girls have equal responses while in the case media the response from the boys is far better than from the girls. Very surprisingly, there are also responses from among the girls in the automotive sector which is a different feature from that of the other states.

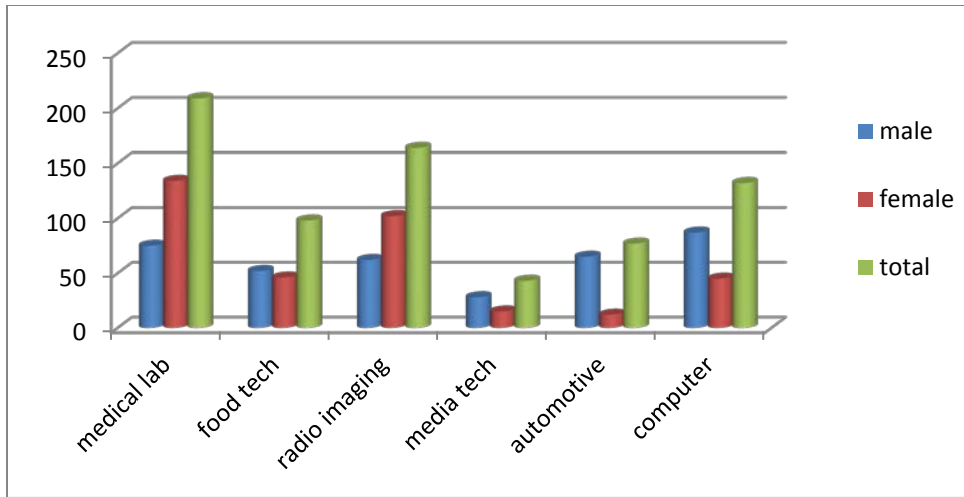


Figure 3: Bar chart showing students response to various trades in the two community colleges.

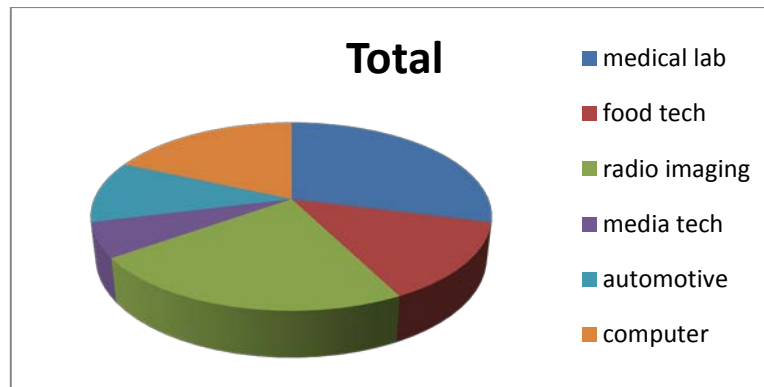


Figure 4: Pie Chart showing responses of total applicants to different trades which are being implemented at the two community colleges initiated by the Government of Manipur.

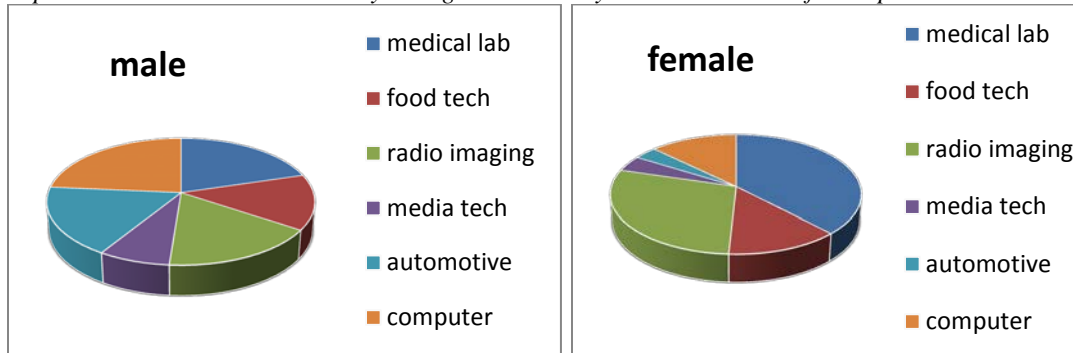


Figure 5: Pie Charts showing responses of male and female applicants to different trades which are being implemented at the two community colleges initiated by the Government of Manipur.

4. Issues

Despite of many opportunities for the unemployed youths in the two community colleges set up in Manipur there are also many issues pertaining to the implementation

of the Community Colleges at the initial stage. Many hardships were faced by the Nodal Officers while implementing the schemes.

- a. **Lack of awareness:** As the old vocational system of education in Manipur failed with negligible outcome to the society, the new concept of community college is also taken as similar to the traditional style of vocational education which could not give any significant impact to the society. Even among the intellectuals, it was not treated as a new approach to solve the unemployment problems in the state. The concept of industry partners in implementing the schemes was also treated as bogus and not applicable in the society.
- b. **Lack of industry and entrepreneurship:** There is no big industry in Manipur except some small ones in the Healthcare and Food Sectors. Babina Healthcare and Hospitality Pvt Ltd, Shija Hospitals and Research Institute, Raj Medicity and Imphal Hospitals and Research Institute are some of the leading industries in the healthcare sector under private initiatives. Thangjam Agro Industries Pvt Ltd, Kangla Foods, etc are some of the leading food industries in Manipur. These industries cannot provide placements to all the trainees after completion of diplomas and degrees from the community colleges. Therefore, more emphasis is now being given in becoming entrepreneurs after completion of the courses under the skill based educational programs. Apart from assuring the students' placements in the local industry partners, it is advisable to train them for entrepreneur skills and professions.
- c. **Infrastructure Issues-** as the State has been facing acute financial shortages since the last one decade, the colleges in Manipur are now facing lack of sufficient infrastructure in providing skill education. New labs have to be developed out of the fund allocated for academic activities and purchase of equipment. As for example, the equipment for practical classes in respect of radio imaging technology in Dhanamanjuri Community College cannot be installed at the main building block for the normal classes because of radiation issues. Therefore, a separate building block for the laboratory has to be constructed with prescribed norms for holding the equipment for X-ray, Ultrasound, MRI and CT Scans.

Additional infrastructure has to be developed for classrooms and staff rooms to meet the requirements of the courses to be introduced in the colleges.

- d. **Issues in modalities of implementation-** the implementing agencies are still confusing on the implementation part. Even among the teachers the concept is not yet clear. Some people think that Community Colleges are just the UGC schemes like major or minor research projects which lapse after the completion of the terms. Some other say that community colleges are like junior colleges being attached initially at the host institutions which later shall become full-fledged autonomous colleges with the appointment of regular Principals, faculty and staff. Even the intellectuals cannot exactly identify

which community college shall have to be treated as autonomous separate college in due course of time and which are to wind up at the end of the plan period.

In the US, such Community Colleges are also known as Junior Colleges having its own Principal to look after the administration. Some of the Community Colleges are run under the strict supervision of the Industries.

- e. **Non-uniformity in vertical and horizontal mobility:** due to the diversified trades and courses offered in various colleges, there are certain problems in the exit and entry points. As for example, those who have completed diploma in medical laboratory technician in one college may move to the B Voc. degree courses in the third year provided B Voc. in the same trade is there in the later. But, for those colleges where different sectors are introduced, how can the student who completed advanced diploma in one trade move in the other trade for obtaining the B Voc. degrees.
- f. **Non- uniformity in credit transfer system:** due to variation of the syllabus and curricula from one college to the other under choice based credit system, there are always issues in transferring the student from one college to the other or from one trade to the other. This problem is more serious in the context of Manipur where there is only little number of colleges having skill based programs. Uniform pattern may be adopted for all colleges and/or trades by restructuring the modalities of adoption of the choice based credit system in Manipur.
- g. **Issues in aligning syllabi and curricula with the National Occupational Standard (NOS):** The Qualification Packs (QP) prescribed in the National Occupational Standards in the website of the National Skill Development Council (NSDC) is not adequate and incomplete. As for example, the Qualification Packs for Level 6 and Level 7 are not yet developed in respect of Food Technology whereas the classes for the 3rd semester and 4th Semesters have already been started. Only two Qualification Packs are found in the Level – 5 of the National Skill Qualification Framework (NSQF) which is very limited as far as the choice of training is concerned.
- h. **Assessment Issues:** Though the second semester course in respect of Medical Lab Technology has been completed the Healthcare Sector Skill Council is not in a position to conduct assessment for qualifying levels – 4 and 5 which is again a serious issue.

Conclusion

The concept of Community College, B Voc. and KAUSHAL Kendras which are now in the infantile stage shall be a boon to the State like Manipur. The youth who are frustrated with no vision in life because of unemployment shall open their eyes and see the world of employability by introducing the schemes on pilot basis. The

attention from all Stakeholders, Industrialists and Politicians may join their hands in fulfilling the mission for a skill Manipur and hence the vision for Skilling India by proper implantation of the skill development programs in this part of India.

References:

1. *Status of Implementation of the Dhanamanjuri Community College, Imphal, Manipur* (2015)
2. *UGC Guidelines for implementation of Community Colleges*(2014)
3. M R Sheikh, *Education for Employment*, D M College of Science Publications, (2013)
4. M R Sheikh, *Opportunities and Challenges in implementing Skill Based Programs in Higher Education in Manipur*, International Conference on Sustainable Skill Based Programs, National Institute of Technical Teachers Training and Research(NITTTR), Chandigarh, (2016)