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Repositioning business education for employment and self employment through content pedagogy and constructive alignment of learning outcomes

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ABSTRACT

It is high time that the commerce education be construed on the basis of knowledge, skill and ethical components. Through this it is possible for the learner to acquire core competencies, develop an attitudinal change and the elementary managerial skills to handle real life situations. So it is the collective responsibility of teachers, administrators, regulatory bodies and the interested parties to initiate the change process to upgrade the quality of commerce education to suit the needs of the society.

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1. Introduction

Technology driven cyber society is becoming a reality. This new reality has evoked a series of changes in the government policies in the form of Liberalization, Privatization and globalization. From command regime, the movement is towards liberalized economy. This process has triggered a chain reaction in all the sectors of the economy. New opportunities are opening up in the service sectors and there is an emergence of BPO sector (Business Process outsourcing). This sector is fast expanding and offers employment opportunities in low end and high-end operations.¹ The tangible outcome of this scenario is the passion for excellence. Earlier Bench marks of quality standards are being discarded for a better alternative. This invasion is visible in the education sector also. One can observe the changes in the priorities and policies of the government.²

On the whole, the economy is transforming in to a "deregularized and digitalized economy". In this

background, there is a need for rethinking on commerce education in terms of repositioning it as Business Education.

This paper traces the development of commerce education in the light of Sri. V.K.R.V committee report of 1961, Sri M.V.Mather Committee report 1982, Report of curriculum Development Centre in Commerce 1981, and the recommendations by the high power committee set up by the Government of Karnataka under the Chairmanship of Prof. Eresi, 1998-99.

Commerce education is in transition. Commerce Education at the university level has suffered from a rather india scriminating combination of liberal and vocational subjects, and this has perhaps led to a tendency as its part to fall between two stools (Bidi Chand, 1993).³ This tendency has created a twofold impact on commerce education. Quality deterioration on the one hand, and on the other competition from the professional institutes like management institute.⁴ Over the years, acceptability for the commerce graduates and postgraduates are declining in the employment market. Employers prefer M.B.A/C.A/ I.C.W.A/A.C.S /C.F.A/M Com; the last preference is given to M Com (Based on B.T and E.T employment opportunities

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period 1999 June to December 1999). This trend reveals the fact that "something" is lacking in commerce education or "Commerce education" is not marketed properly. The "brand equity" in the commerce education "nomenclature" may be losing its luster.⁵

2. Agenda for commerce/business education

The vision of commerce education can be transformed in to a reality by focusing efforts on knowledge component, skill component and ethical component, which can be called as the "Holy Trio" for commerce/Business education. Knowledge component should include contemporary business knowledge in the form of upgraded syllabus and relevant subjects in the course of study. Skill component should include exposure to Business and industry through apprenticeship, on the job training, practical on communication skills, interpersonal relationship, decision-making and teamwork. Ethics and value components must include Yoga and meditation and exposure to ancient folk wisdom (Figure 1). Commerce education especially at the undergraduate level should continue to be liberal education with emphasis on application of knowledge in specialized fields related to business and commerce (Bidi Chand, 1993).

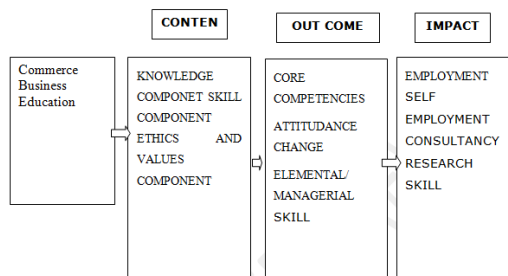


Fig. 1: Agenda for commerce/business education content learning out comes and impact learning

Application of knowledge and focusing on specialization is very much essential for developing design for commerce education. Culmination of knowledge, skill and ethical component in the study design will result in the attitudinal change, development of core competencies and the elementary managerial skill to face the real life business situations. Commerce education should pass on these ideals to the learner.

3. Determinants of learning out comes

Figure 2 clearly explains the role of curriculum design in learning competencies, motivation to learn and its impact on self-esteem through positive alignment. At present a few educational institutions impart global quality education where there is an existence of contemporary content and a

positive alignment to employment and self employment at a higher level and at lower level. There are institutions where curriculum design is low and alignment is equally low.

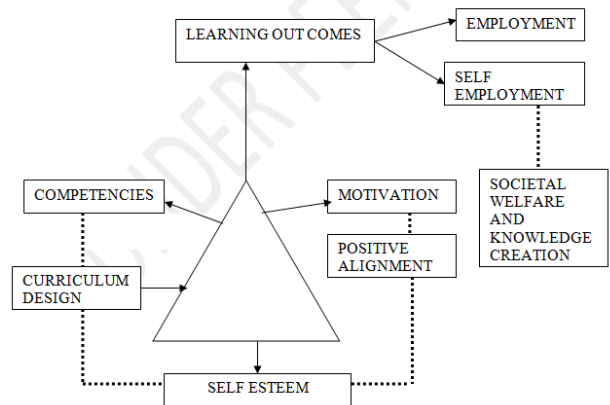


Fig. 2: Determinants of learning out comes — a triad

4. Content and alignment

There is always a correlation between content and alignment. Excellence is always encompasses acceptability and alignment. It is the conscious efforts in designing content and constructing positive alignment of the learning outcomes to employment and self-employment determines the status of excellence (Figure 3). So the status of excellence is the result of conscious efforts in content design and the construction of the positive alignment.

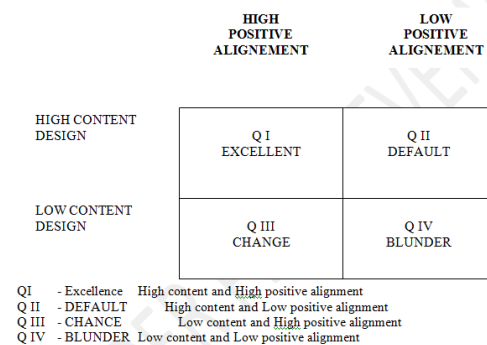


Fig. 3: Content and alignment matrix

5. Suggested pedagogy for Learning Process

Teacher must facilitate Learning by using traditional and innovative methods (Figure 4). He must help the Learner to understand and prepare him/her to demonstrate in any given situation. Here the Teacher can use Traditional method i.e regular classroom/board/chalk method. Depending on the availability and learner's need a teacher can choose

electronic media, participative learning method, interactive learning method and activity based learning method.

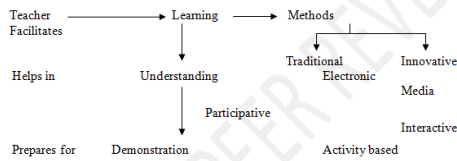


Fig. 4: Learning process linkage

There is a need for a shift in the pedagogy of commerce education. In management education, the emphasis still tends to be on cognitive or knowledge inputs ; in management training it still tends to be on skills and techniques; both theory and practice (Allan. H. Anderson, 1998). The amalgamation of both theory and practice is incorporated in commerce curricula. This suggests for activity based learning methodology for commerce education where the student learns the theory aspects and applies it to the reality. Simulation exercises can also be included in the learning process. For developing communication skills, decision-making, and team work and for interpersonal relationships; group assignments can be given to students, study circles can be formed to disseminate information's beyond the syllabus. Participative method of teaching can be introduced on a phased manner (Gurucharan Das, 2000).

6. Learning process linkage

Necessary training should be given to teachers to adopt innovative teaching methods. Similarly educational administrators should be compulsorily given training so that they will motivate both the students as well as the teachers. Innovative experiments require organizational support and encouragement to carry on these activities. The training of teachers as well as the educational administrations should be the prime priority in ensuring quality education (George Joseph and John Desrochers, 1998).

To incorporate contemporary business knowledge in the syllabus it is advisable to have a representative from the chamber of commerce and industry in the syllabus framing Committee. The representative will act as a bridge between the academia and the business. Interaction between business and industry can be established through industrial tours, a market survey for the industries and through guest lectures. These activities can be linked to placement services also. This is possible through initiating a change in the syllabus, teaching methodology, creating a favourable learning atmosphere in the institution and also change in the nomenclature.

7. End user profile

End users for commerce graduates and postgraduates are the business, industry institutions and ultimately the society (Figure 5).

The needs of the end user in the next millennium will be based on "the passion for talents". It is the talent, which demarcates between the average and the excellent. There is a growing realization that it is not the technology, not the net but the intellectual capital will see companies through the 21st century. A strong talent base will be the key differentiating factor (Birla K M, 1998). Identifying the potential facilitating the development of "talent" will be the real challenge for the commerce education in the next millennium.

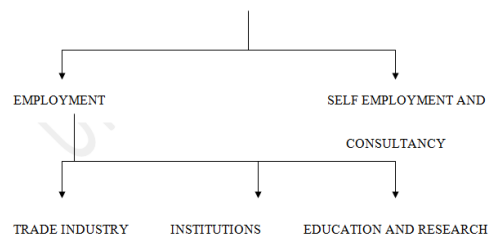


Fig. 5: Available Opportunity

8. Conclusion

Change is an ongoing process brings chaos and disorders in the initial stages. The possible changes can be anticipated and a suitable methodology can be construed to combat the change. At present the commerce education (business education) is facing such crisis in the form of external competition and quality deterioration.

Time has come to recognize this state of affairs and to initiate suitable measures to prevent further degradation. It's the high time that the commerce education be construed on the basis of knowledge, skill and ethical components. Through this it is possible for the learner to acquire core competencies, develop an attitudinal change and the elementary managerial skills to handle the real life situations The end user is always interested in "such" employees who can handle the real life situations. It's the collective responsibility of the teachers and administrators, regulatory bodies and the interested parties to initiate the change process to upgrade the quality of commerce education to suit the needs of the society.

9. Source of funding

None.

10. Conflict of Interest

None.

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