

Non-Formal Vocational Training and National Development:
The Contribution of IGNOU In North East India
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INTRODUCTION

Vocational training is about “imparting of specialized skills and knowledge, instilling social and political attitudes and behaviour patterns for successful economic activities by people engaged in dependent employment, self-employment in both Formal as well as Non-formal trainings”. In its 'Formal training' all training courses are held in state or private (but state-certified) institutions and are regulated by state guidelines where as in the 'Non-formal training' it takes place without being subject to state guidelines and provides skills-upgrading for those who wish to extend their competencies. Vocational training, in its non-formal form, upgrades the skills, helps in capacity building, expands livelihood opportunities for the underprivileged, unreached informal sector workers and plays a key role in the national development .

This paper enumerates the non-formal vocational training being imparted by the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) to the underprivileged and unreached people in the North East Region (NER). It underlines the university's two channels i.e Regional Centres and Institutes through which these training programmes are imparted. The paper highlights the university's contribution towards the national development by conducting these training programmes in the N E R.

IGNOU

The Indira Gandhi National Open University, established by an Act of Parliament in 1985, is the largest University in terms of its enrolment. Today, nearly 3 million learners from India and 36 other countries are enrolled in IGNOU. There are 21 schools of study, 61 Regional Centres, approximately 3000 learner support centres in India and 60 overseas centres. The university offers nearly 350 Certificate, Diploma, Degree and Doctoral Programmes and has 420 faculty members and academic staff at the Head Quarters and Regional Centres. About 36, 000 academic counsellors from the conventional institutions of higher learning and professionals from various organizations conduct the face-to-face sessions and contribute to continuous evaluation of the learners' performance. The Commonwealth of Learning (COL), Canada, has conferred on the University the 'Centre of Excellence Award' in Distance Education and the 'Award of Excellence for Distance Education Materials'. As an open learning institution, IGNOU provides flexibility in entry level in terms of age, place, pace and duration of study.

The university uses multimedia teaching-learning packages which include self-instructional print and audio-video materials, radio and television broadcasts, face-to-face counselling, laboratory, hands-on experience, teleconferencing, video-conferencing, interactive radio counselling, interactive multimedia CD-Roms, Internet-based learning, the use of mobile phone for instant messaging and practical / practice teaching at selected programme centres.

NON-FORMAL VOCATIONAL TRAINING PROGRAMMES IN NER

As per the National Skills Commission Report , Ministry of Labour , 2008, IGNOU is giving a new connotation to the term 'Vocation'. With a mandate to create a work force among the youth in both the organized and the unorganized sector, the university is imparting the Non-Formal Vocational Training

programmes in the NER. The university, through the Educational Development of North East Region Unit (EDNERU) , has created the educational access in the region by cutting across physical and geographical barriers. Its inherent flexibility of Open and Distance Learning (ODL) helps in equalising opportunities of education to the hitherto 'unreached' in the region. A wide network of Regional Centres, learning centres, tele-learning centres and institutes have been established to overcome geographical constraints and to provide the best resources available through Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Open and Distance Learning . Need-based vocational and entrepreneurship programmes have been planned and implemented in collaboration with other State/Central agencies to increase employment opportunities in the region.

THE CHANNELS

Through its various educational activities, the university has been constantly striving for the development of human resource in the region by contributing to a holistic planning of education and vocational skills. This is being undertaken in consonance with the regional ethos and the requirements of the region. Initiatives have been taken to develop value added, tailor made courses which have demand in the job market. The University conducts several skill development, entrepreneurship and vocational training programmes in different states of the region through its regional centers and institutes to enhance the employability and self-reliance of the youth of the region in various sectors of the region's economy. One of the foremost initiatives undertaken by the university has been the operationalization of the following institutes in the NE region for the professional development of the people of the region:

The IGNOU Institute for Vocational Education and Training (IIVET), Shillong

The IGNOU Institute For Vocational Education And Training (IIVET), Shillong identifies and develops need-based relevant vocational programmes. It trains the educated youth of the region in various skills to enhance their opportunities for gainful employment in collaboration with 60 Common Service Centres in Meghalaya and Sikkim adopting the tele-centre model.

Institute for Professional Competency Advancement of Teachers through ODL (IPCAT),Guwahati

The institute provides training for the untrained teachers and continuous training for the in-service teachers through ODL mode using multi-media technology. The Institute organizes orientation programme for Madarsa Teachers of Assam and workshop on Teacher Training Strategies for elementary level in the context of Right to Education Act 2009 assisted by UNICEF

IGNOU Centre for ODL in Research & Training in Agriculture (ICRTA), Agartala

The centre studies the socio-economic aspects, gaps and challenges in imparting knowledge and skills to farmers. Its objective is to develop an action model for using Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in Agriculture Extension and Education and Information System; to develop human resources for Agriculture and Agriculture based industries; and to capacity building and competency upgradation of the professionals in agriculture and allied sectors through ODL system. At present the ICRTA is conducting training programmes for farmers and extension personnel of Assam, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Meghalaya, Sikkim and Tripura.

MODES OF TRAINING

The training programmes conducted in the NER are imparted by the following modes:

- Lectures by experts
- Field-visits
- Practical field experience
- School screening

- Diagnostic camps
- Practical counselling
- Collaboration Centres
- Hands--on training
- E-Learning portal - Information Systems Services and Networking for North East Agriculture (KISSAN -NE)
- Video studios
- Call-centre system

These training programmes are imparting the following technical and general vocational skills:

Table 1: Vocational Training Programmes

a) *Technical Vocational Skills*

- Auto Mobile Repair,
- Weaving,
- Repair of Gadgets and Instruments(Mobile Phones and Computers)
- Electrical Repairs
- Tailoring
- Printing

b) *General Vocational Skills*

- Public Speaking
- Personality Development
- Writing skills
- Vocational Skills for Domestic Workers
- Vocational Skills for Dropouts
- Plastic Engineering Technology for the Educated Unemployed
- Low Cost House making with Bamboos
- Communication / Soft Skills

c) *Vocational skills in Agriculture*

- Watershed Management
- Rain Water Harvesting

d) *Vocational Skills in Information & Technology*

- Use of multimedia packages
- Operation of Information Systems Services in a Call-Centre system

Table 2 – List of Vocational Training Programmes & the Channels

Sl.	Area	No.of Participants	Year	Channel
1	Training Programme for Village Artisans in Weaving	50	2009	RC,Shillong
2	Short Term Skills Training in	60	2009	RC,Shillong

	Food Processing and Candle Making			
3	Short Term Skills Training in Basket Making and Flower Making	75	2009	RC, Shillong
4	Vocational Training Programme on Bamboo based Handicraft product for the Village Artisans	30	2009	RC, Shillong
5	Training programme on Imparting the culinary skills to Village Artisans	20	2009	RC, Shillong
6	Vocational Training Programme of Hardware and Software repairing	20	2009	RC, Shillong
7	Barefoot Technicians/ Grassroot level workers course in the Hearing Disability	13	2009	IIVET, Shillong
8	Electrical Wiring for the youth in the Common Services Centre	15	2009	IIVET, Shillong
9	Vocational Skills Development Programme in Advanced Auto Cad,	14	2009	IIVET, Shillong
10	Vocational Training for Women Domestic Workers in Basic Computer Skills and Communication Skills.	32	2009	IIVET, Shillong
11	Training Programme on Marketing of Agricultural produces	50	2010	RC, Agartala
12	Integrated Farming System	49	2007	RC, Guwahati
14	Rain and Harvesting and Watershed Management	48	2007	RC, Kohima
15	Dairy Farming	200	2006	RC, Imphal
		72	2010	RC, Agartala

METHODS OF TRAINING

Outlined below are the methods being used in the non-formal vocational training programmes for imparting the technical and general vocational skills:

Barefoot Technicians/ Grass root Level Workers Course in the Hearing Disability

- Practical
- School screening
- Awareness and diagnostic camps in the villages
- Family visit and counselling
- Maintenance of Record books

Marketing of Agricultural Produce

- Practical Training by experts from ICAR, National Research Centre for Orchid, ICRTA, IGNOU Regional Centre Agartala, SIMFED, NERAMAC, & MEVEDIR
- Lectures
- Colorful slide, diagrams & photographs
- Face to face interaction with the scientists

Bamboo Based Handicraft Training

- Division in four sessions
- Sessions on teaching and learning skills to make utility items having local demand.
- Sessions devoted to teaching making of decorative items having substantial demand outside state.
- Experts from IITs

Dairy Farming

- Technical session with practical demonstration on scientific dairy farming technology.
- Theory classes by experts from the Agricultural Science Centre, Central Agricultural University and the Animal Husbandry Department
- Colorful slide show, photograph & diagrams
- Practical classes on different aspect of preparation of rations, demonstration on fodder production and preservation, artificial insemination, care & management of dairy animals
- Field visits to the Research Complex and Milk Cooperative to demonstrate the practical aspects.

Watershed Management:

- Specialists/ experts from Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), State Agriculture University, Forest Department, Ground Water Board, National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD)
- Survey and demonstration of topography of land
- Preparation of inventory of resources, soil erosion and its management, rainwater conservation and its reutilization, people participation and financial avenues from the banks.

Water Harvesting and Watershed Management

- Experts from Assam Agricultural University (AAU), the ICAR Research complex for the North Eastern region and the Agriculture Science Centre (KVK), and School of Agriculture, IGNOU
- Lectures on topics pertaining to water storage, conservation and utilization.
- Local field visit to a place where a 'Watershed Society' actively involved in water harvesting during rainy season
- Collecting rainwater in ponds constructed at particular points in the fields for utilizing conserved water for irrigation and fish and duck culturing.

Integrated farming system

- Experts from Assam Agricultural University (AAU), State government, Assam and ICAR
- Lectures on various aspects of an Integrated Farming System. (IFS), Organic farming, farm composting, marketing, economics and fish production.
- Organization of exhibition showing the models of IFS, new crop varieties, animal health care approaches (vaccines), improved farm implements and handicraft items
- Field trip to village.

Vocational skills Development programme in Advanced Auto Cad

- Collaboration with Tool Room & Training Centre
- Field visits
- Hands –on -Training

Vocational Training for Women Domestic Workers in Basic Computer Skills and Communication Skills.

- Collaboration with the North East Domestic Workers Association.
- Computer Skills in typing, word processing, browsing the internet
- Communication in English language pronunciation and Conversation

Vocational Training Programme of Hardware and Software repairing

- Knowledge of Hardware and Software
- Fault finding, trouble shooting,
- PCB identification .
- Division of group in 4 batches
- Group discussion
- Career counselling on mobile repair.

In these training programmes, the trainees were evaluated by testing their basic knowledge prior to (pre-test) and after completion (post-test). A questionnaire developed and used for pre- and post-tests consisted of objective -type questions on various aspects of the training programme. Most of the candidates scored 3 to 10 marks in the pre-test and 11 to 19 marks in the post-test, result which revealed that the training had significantly improved their knowledge and skills.

FEEDBACK

The feedback from the participants about the training programme was collected by the IGNOU officials . It revealed the following observations of the participants :

- The training programme was quite useful for helping them to gain technical skills;
- They can utilize the technical skills for improving their existing management;
- They gained knowledge about new scientific techniques;
- The programme inspired them to take up entrepreneurship on a large scale.
- The knowledge gained can improve their performance
- They had learned many technical skills which can be utilized for improving their existing agricultural / horticultural and soil and water conservation practices
- They had gained knowledge about new scientific techniques used in rainwater-harvesting, soil conservation
- The knowledge gained can improve their watershed and water- harvesting management skills
- They wouldl adopt the new techniques to manage their agro-wastes and apply them to raise their crops
- They are inspired to become entrepreneurs
- They learnt many technical skills through these training programmes which would help in their capacity- building and improving their socio-economic condition
- They were willing to undergo an advance training programme to acquire the skill of designing in weaving and expressed their willingness to undergo further training to sharpen their skills.
- The Programme built their capacity to earn and made them self dependent financially.
- The Programme was very useful for poor and unemployed youth to earn a living without any big capital investment
- It had a tremendous impact

- It really benefited the disadvantaged and under-privileged
- Most of the trainees got sponsorship from Sans Cellular Concept, to be later absorbed in the company for further mobile repair training.
- It revived the art of weaving and inspired the women association to take it up on commercial scale.
- They formed Self Help Groups in villages.
- Supplied mini tool kits speeded up the production process.
- Such vocational training programmes must be organized regularly.

The participants expressed their satisfaction and offered thanks to the IGNOU authorities for conducting such useful vocational training programmes for upgrading their skills, for their capacity building and expanding their livelihood opportunities and boosting the economic growth and development of the NER.

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The university is contributing towards the national development in a big way by adopting successful models of training and capacity building. Following the National Skills Mission and the National Scheme of Enhancement of Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) and Skill Development in the economically backward districts, the university is developing and implementing a skill development action plan which evolves around the possibilities of optimal utilization of the training infrastructure and the intellectual capabilities available both in the formal sector of education and in other public and private sectors. The short-term vocational training programmes of the university through effective partnerships with Small and Medium Scale industries, Corporate Houses and both public and private training centers are showing encouraging results in the employment generation.

At present the vocational training programmes are being diversified, considering the social needs of the people. The university has ventured into the socio economic development programmes with a view to train the village artisans and rural entrepreneurs in taking up self employment. Its approach and system of functioning, being people oriented, has resulted into formulation of several programmes and schemes and collaboration with various agencies in order to provide assistance in getting bank loan, familiarization with self employment schemes, identification of technical collaboration and providing of help in setting up infrastructure. Such training programmes enable the local youth to form Self Help Groups, analyse the emerging problems and take corrective action accordingly. Through these training programmes they learn to produce the items at affordable price in bigger quantity to meet the market demands and exposes them to the skills of using the modern tools and equipments and skills of ensuring the survival and sustainability and thereby enhancing their confidence.

CONCLUSION

Vocational training, in its non-formal form, upgrades the skills, helps in capacity building, expands livelihood opportunities for the underprivileged, unreached informal sector workers and plays a key role in the national development. The Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) is imparting the vocational training to the underprivileged and unreached people across the country. The university's unit Educational Development of North East Region (EDNERU) is promoting the non-formal vocational training programmes in the North East Region (NER) through the channels of Regional Centres and Institutes and collaboration with the relevant institutions and organizations. Various vocational training programmes are being imparted to develop the technical vocational skills like Auto Mobile Repair, Weaving, Repair of Gadgets and Instruments, Electrical Repairs, Tailoring, Printing, Barefoot Technicians/ Grassroot level workers course in the Hearing Disability; general vocational skills like Public Speaking, Personality Development, Writing skills, Vocational Skills for Domestic Workers, Vocational Skills for Dropouts, Plastic Engineering Technology for the Educated Unemployed, Low Cost House Making with Bamboos, Food Processing and Candle Making, Basket Making and Flower Making, Bamboo based Handicraft product for the Village Artisans, Communication / Soft Skills; vocational skills in Agriculture like Watershed Management, Rain Water Harvesting Marketing of Agricultural produces, Integrated Farming System, Dairy Farming and vocational skills in Information & Technology like development and use of multimedia packages, Operation of

Information Systems Services and Call-Centre system. Different modes like lectures by experts,field-visits,practical field experience,school screening,diagnostic camps,practical counseling,collaboration centres,hands--on training,E-Learning portal, Information Systems Services and Networking for North East Agriculture, video studios and call-centre system etc. are being used for imparting the training programmes effectively.

The feedback collected from the participants of the training programmes outlines the university's models of vocational training and capacity building. It also highlights the university's successful implementation of skill development action plan which has an optimal utilization of the training infrastructure and intellectual capabilities from the formal sector of education and public and private sectors along with effective partnerships with small and medium scale industries and corporate houses. The promising results after the conduct of these non-formal vocational training programmes are showcasing the university's contribution towards the employment generation and socio-economic development of the NER .

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