

# **Achieving Development Goals: Impact of Vocational Programmes of Tamil Nadu Open University**

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## **Abstract**

Open and Distance Learning has emerged as a powerful instrument for augmenting opportunities in the field of vocational education. The objectives of the study are to develop the competency and skills of the learners after completion of TNOU Vocational Education Programmes for their livelihood. Using innovative technology both print and multimedia approach the nine Programmes viz House-Electrician, Refrigeration and Air-Conditioning Technician, Four Wheeler Mechanism, Health-Assistant, Pre-Primary Teacher Training, Garment Making, DTP, Plumbing and Catering are offered for immediate employment to the learners. Well-developed practical manual and in plant practical training are provided to the learners to improve their skills. Community Colleges are the service providers for these programmes and they have collaboration with industries for providing practical training and placement. The profiles of the 25,000 learners are school dropouts in the age group of 15-20 who do not have any qualification. 50 percent of the learners are employed in the industries after completion of their study. Thus the Vocational Education of TNOU address achieving development goals through Open and Distance and technology mediated learning.

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Today it appears that only Open Universities have the potential to convert the ideal of Vocational Education to reality and nothing can stand between the Open Universities and the willing learners. Open Universities are therefore a boon to the unemployed in India. The Tamil Nadu Open University was established by an Act (No.27 of 2002) of the Legislative Assembly of the Government of Tamil Nadu to benefit those who have been deprived of and/or denied the access to higher education especially destitute, physically challenged, working men and women, economically weaker sections of the society, and those who discontinued education for various reasons. It is aiming to reach the hitherto unreached. The academic operations of the University began in 2003 in right earnest with about 20 Programmes, each comprising a number of traditional as well as innovative Programmes, in a wide range of areas. Currently, it offers 63 Programmes, of which Vocational Education Programmes are very popular among the unemployed girls and boys.

Though the University is hardly three years young, it has registered an impressive growth having a cumulative student-strength of about 60,000 of which close to 50 percent are from vocational education programmes. The confidence the society at large has reposed on us further strengthens our resolve to achieve equity in access and quality. Nowadays Vocational Education is seen as a necessary commitment to the social and economic development of a country.

Open and Distance Learning (ODL) has emerged as a powerful instrument for augmenting opportunities for higher education especially in the field of vocational

education. The successful completion of Tamil Nadu Open University (TNOU) Vocational Education Programmes helps the learners especially the rural, poor and downtrodden to earn their livelihood. In the present scenario where the employment opportunities are limited, the rural and down trodden people cannot compete with the competency level of the urban people in grabbing the opportunities available; vocational programmes will enhance their skills and knowledge for immediate employment particularly in the private sector. Well-developed practical manual in simple language, computer assisted teaching methods, life coping skills, communication skills, in-plant practical training and interactive radio counselling in local language are provided to the learners to get sufficient knowledge and boost the employment opportunities of weaker sections of the society in rural and urban Tamil Nadu.

## **II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

In order to create employment opportunities, the proposal to offer Vocational Programmes was initiated in Tamil Nadu Open University. This study aims at the finding out the usefulness of the Programmes after completing the Courses .The major objectives of the study are:

- To measure the competency and skills of the learners after completion of TNOU Vocational Education Programmes(VEP)
- To study the employment opportunities of Learners after successful completion of VEP Programme at TNOU
- To study social and economic status of VEP learners after obtaining TNOU Vocational Education especially in rural area.

## **III. VOCATIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAMMES OF TNOU**

Vocational Education Programmes has been designed by TNOU in such a way to enhance their skills and knowledge for immediate employment particularly in the private sector. Using innovative technology especially in print media and other multimedia approach the Vocational Education Programmes were developed. In order to enable the school dropouts to earn their livelihood, the need based Programmes launched by TNOU are given below:

1. Diploma in House Electrician (DHE)
2. Diploma in Refrigeration and Air-Conditioning Technician (DRAT)
3. Diploma in Four Wheeler Mechanism (DFWM)
4. Diploma in Health Assistant (DHA)
5. Diploma in Pre-Primary Teacher Training (DPTT)
6. Diploma in Fashion Design and Garment Making (DFGM)
7. Diploma in DTP Operator (DDTP)
8. Diploma in Plumbing Technician (DPT) and

9. Diploma in Catering Assistant (DCA)

#### IV. DELIVERY SYSTEM

TNOU delivers all its Academic Programmes through Learning Resource Centres (LRCs) /Programme Study Centres (PSCs) /Vocational Programme Centres (VPCs). The Vocational Programmes are delivered through VPCs. Community Colleges are the main service providers for these programmes and recognized as Vocational Programme Study Centres of Tamil Nadu Open University. Community Colleges that are having minimum infrastructure facilities are giving hands on training to TNOU-VEP learners. Further these VPCs have collaboration with relevant industries for training and placement. There has been demand for starting VPC among the public in different years. They want to establish VPC for two purposes. One is, they can get employment for themselves and the other one is, they can give employment to others. The status of VPCs established in 2004-05 and 2005-06 is given in table-1.

**Table-1: Number of Vocational Programme Centres**

SNo	Name of Programme	2004-05	2005-06	Total
1	Diploma in DTP Operator (DDTP)	56	48	104
2	Diploma in Refrigeration & Air-conditioning Technician (DRAT)	34	16	50
3	Diploma in Four-Wheeler Mechanism (DFWM)	27	12	39
4	Diploma in House Electrician (DHE)	46	12	58
5	Diploma in Catering Assistant (DCA)	24	15	39
6	Diploma in Plumbing Technician (DPT)	16	13	29
7	Diploma in Fashion Design and Garment Making (DFGM)	*	54	54
8	Diploma in Pre-Primary Teacher Training (DPTT)	*	201	201
9	Diploma in Health Assistant (DHA)	*	134	134
<b>Total</b>		<b>203</b>	<b>505</b>	<b>708</b>

\* Not Offered

Nearly about 25,000 learners have enrolled for the Vocational Education Programmes since 2004. The profiles of the learners are mainly dropouts, children from tsunami-affected families, failures in the secondary school level and skilled workers and most of them are in the age group between 15-20. Some of the learners i.e. Skilled Workers do not have any qualification or certification for their skills. The learners who are enrolled in the TNOU Vocational Education Programmes is depicted in the table-2.

**Table-2 : Enrolment in different VEP in 2004-05 and 2005-06**

SNo	Name of Programme	Enrolment			2005-06	Total
				2004-05		
1	Diploma in DTP Operator (DDTP)	399	991	1390		
2	Diploma in Refrigeration & Air-conditioning Technician (DRAT)	159	186	345		
3	Diploma in Four-Wheeler Mechanism (DFWM)	146	282	428		
4	Diploma in House Electrician (DHE)	223	405	628		
5	Diploma in Catering Assistant (DCA)	214	121	335		
6	Diploma in Plumbing Technician (DPT)	46	23	69		
7	Diploma in Fashion Design and Garment Making (DFGM)	*	203	203		
8	Diploma in Pre-Primary Teacher Training (DPTT)	*	17559	17559		
9	Diploma in Health Assistant (DHA)	*	3952	3952		
<b>Total</b>		<b>1187</b>	<b>23772</b>	<b>24959</b>		

\* Not Offered

From the table-2 it clearly shows that there is a clear sweep in the enrolment for the TNOU Vocational Education Programmes. Further it was collected from the admission data that 15,864 learners are women.

## V. WOMEN IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

In India Women comprise the largest section of the under privileged group and continue to shoulder all domestic responsibilities. Further they face restriction in the form of traditional patriarchal attitudes. Vocational Education through distance mode has been recommended primarily for women students who had to discontinue their studies for financial or other reasons and also who stay in rural areas. It also paves a way for those who want to continue learning after marriage to improve their social status and economic development. At present the number of women students has considerably increased thanks to the Open and Distance Learning which women find to be convenient and beneficial. Nearly 50 Percent of the learners after completion of the vocational education are employed in the relevant industries. In this way the vocational programmes of Tamil Nadu Open University address achieving development goals of Commonwealth of Learning (COL) through open and distance and technology mediated learning.

## VI. ANALYSIS OF THE STUDY

The data for the analysis were collected through:

1. Interactions with learners through e-mail,
2. By circulating a feed back scheduled to 120 Vocational Programmes Centres Coordinators and
3. By direct interview with 28 learners of one of the Vocational Programme Centre. These data were analysed by statistics to find out their competency skills, employment status and social and economic status.

#### **(1). Competency and Skills of the Learners after Completion of TNOU:**

The competency and skills of the learners after completion of TNOU Programmes has been increased as per the feedback given by the Learners. Each and every student enrolled for TNOU's Vocational Education have to study two compulsory courses namely Life coping Skills and Communication skills. These two courses are specifically designed to develop the competency level of a person and to improve their communicative skills. The increase in response for Vocational Education Programme every year clearly states that these Programmes are ones which are currently required for the mass of people of India for developing their own skills and gaining financial positions out of their own skills and competency. Two Learners have been requested to give their feedback over phone. The feedback given by these two learners are:

**Learner-1** who completed the DTP Operator Programme in TNOU express that the training provided by the VPC for the DTP Operator Programme has given the confidence to start DTP Operator business in his area and could earn a minimum of Rs.250/- per day by learning the subjects like Photoshop and Corel Draw and acquiring the Competency and Skills. Similarly **Learner-2** who completed the Catering Programme in TNOU briefed that with the training at VPC for Catering Programme he could get employment in Star Hotel and earn Rs.10, 000/- per month initially.

**(2). Employment opportunities of Learners after successful completion of VEP Programme at TNOU:** The employment opportunities of TNOU Learners in Community Colleges after successful completion of Vocational Education Programmes is 80 to 90 percent. The reason is that TNOU learners have been sent to various industries for internship while studying the Programme. The Industries are observing the competency and skills of TNOU learners during internship and offer the suitable job according to their level of competencies and skills. Nearly 120 TNOU Vocational Programme Centres established in Community Colleges have been requested to give their feed back about the Employment opportunities of Learners after successful completion of VEP Programme at TNOU.

The VEP Learners of TNOU have many different opportunities in their hand and can choose any one of them for their career. The different opportunities that await the VEP learners of TNOU are:

- a. Becoming an Entrepreneur by opening his own firm with his Practical knowledge gained from his related Programme.
- b. Grabbing an opportunities in the same firm where he has undergone his internship training for the Programme.

- c. Getting himself /herself employed in organization relevant to his study.

The feedback given by the Community Colleges is given in Table-3

**Table-3**

Learners Category	Salary per month				Self Employed
		Rs.2000/- to Rs.4000/-	Rs.4000/- to Rs.6000/-	Rs.6000/- to Rs.8000/-	
Male	50%	25%	15%	10%	
Female	60%	20%	15%	5%	

From the table-3 it clearly shows that the nearly 50 percent of learners are employed in Rs.2000/- to Rs.4000/- range of salary per month in the male category and nearly 60 percent of the female learners are employed in the same range. 10 per cent from male category and 5 percent from female are self employed and it is also observed from the above data that there is a potential employment opportunities of Learners after successful completion of VEP Programme at TNOU

**(3). Social and economic status of VEP learners:** The social and economic status of VEP learners after undergoing the TNOU Vocational Programmes is considerably increased. One of the Voactional Programme Centre established in Community College in Chennai where the University headquarters is located has been selected to find out the social and economic status of VEP Learners. Direct interview was carried with 28 learners. The information given by these learners are shown in the Table-4

**Table-4**

Getting suitably Married	75%
Limiting Family size	25%
Commanding the respect. i.e. within the family circle and in the neighbourhood of the community	90%
At the place of work	90%

Table-4 clearly shows that the nearly 90 percent of learners informed that they are Commanding the respect. i.e. within the family circle and in the neighbourhood of the community and also at the place of work and this shows that there is Social and economic development of VEP learners after successful completion of VEP Programme at TNOU

## **VII. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

The finding of the are given below

1. There is clear sweep in the enrolment for the TNOU Vocational Education Programmes. I.e. 24,959 learners are enrolled in TNOU Programme

2. 90 percent of learners are employed and this shows that there are employment opportunities of Learners after successful completion of VEP Programme at TNOU
3. 90 percent of learners informed that they are commanding the respect. i.e. within the family circle and in the neighbourhood of the community and also at the place of work after obtaining diploma through Vocational Education Programme of TNOU

## **VIII. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

In developing countries like India, education is considered an important factor for building confidence and focusing on developmental tasks. Particularly vocational education contributes a lot to shaping a family in a constructive way. Many of the learner groups are neither homogeneous nor sustainable. Such fragmentation is denied access to a holistic understanding of their needs and expectations from the main stream. The phenomenal success of the Open Universities in more than 20 countries has now made it an acceptable system for education. At present Open Learning through distance mode has come to be accepted as relevant and necessary for meeting the requirement of the society. One of the main features of the Open Universities is providing access to higher education to all sections of societies, particularly women, which did not have access to it earlier. Women who particularly suffered this inequality of opportunity now have a greater chance available to them in the form of this new institution. This type of education provided by TNOU in the country is innovative and flexible. All deprived and suppressed people get higher education to achieve their goal through TNOU in our State of Tamil Nadu and our country. Now- a- days there are many numbers of institutions mushrooming in all over the country. The major aim of those is to earn money and the importance to do service to the downtrodden people is very meager. In the developing country like India, need based programmes targeting the unemployed and minorities are to be launched. Then only the economic development of the underdeveloped countries could be improved and speeded up. It is proved to say that TNOU is marching towards the goal of stimulating the economic development of the disadvantaged group through implementing VEP and thus address the development goal of Commonwealth of Learning (COL).

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