

Effectiveness of finishing school programme in the employability of vocational higher secondary education (Agriculture) certificate holders of Kerala

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ABSTRACT: In spite of the high literacy, unemployment is the major crisis faced by the people of Kerala, India which is due to the lack of skill development. The Government realized the significance of vocationalisation and introduced it at senior secondary level in almost all specialisation including agriculture and awarded certificates to students. Kerala Agricultural University (KAU) started the finishing school programme at its various centres to sharpen the skill of these certificate holders in Agriculture (VHSE(Agri) certificate holders) with an objective of enhancing their employability and entrepreneurial ability . This study was conducted among the 350 participants who successfully completed the finishing school programme conducted by KAU with the objective of identifying their present status during the period 2012-2018. The study revealed that 34.27 per cent of the respondents either started self employment ventures or could find employment due to the back up of finishing school programme.

Key words: Kerala Agricultural University(KAU), Vocational higher secondary education(VHSE),Finishing school programme ,

I. INTRODUCTION

In the context of career development, enhanced employability is crucial for the future development of any industry, as the current and future workforce determines the entry and/or upgrading opportunities of the industry (Esther et al., 2016;). Kerala became the first Indian state to achieve 100 per cent primary education through its literacy programme . But in spite of the high literacy, unemployment is the major crisis faced by the people of Kerala. The major problem in Kerala's education sector is the lack of skill development. A study conducted by Inter American Development Bank shows that there is huge The Government realized the significance of

vocationalisation and took great effort to launch vocational education at the senior secondary level. Vocational education was intended to educate and develop expertise in technology and scientific skills in order to give their full potential in their area of interest. Vocational education has been put to form on a number of bases such as commerce based, engineering based, health and para medical based, home science based, agriculture based and hospitality and tourism based. These streams provide the necessary essentials in a skill development platform to excel in these. In Kerala, Vocational Higher Secondary Education (VHSE) in the agriculture curriculum is formed with a view to motivate and equip the students to the agricultural technology and innovations and to take up various agricultural enterprises. But the vision was not translated into meaningful action by the students not only due to the lack of skill developments but also due to lack of positive attitude, confidence and other personality attributes. These issues of skills and attributes shouldn't be left unheard and unseen because future generation is what we invest in them .To solve this problem finishing school methodology was introduced which evolved worldwide in the year 1999. The main idea of a finishing school program is to enhance capacity, employability and public private partnerships of the labor pool through a complementary education and training framework that aims at supplementing, rather than substituting, formal education (Sethi, 2011). It may be a good short and mid-term alternative to bridge the gap between the supply of fresh graduates' skills and the demands of the labour market, thus benefiting both sides of the chain, complementing formal education with a more demand-driven methodology. (IT Pathshala. 2012).

Kerala agricultural University (KAU), had the farthest view and thought to design a finishing school methodology and was brought to action in

the year 2011. The major objective of the programme was to sharpen and refine the personal competencies of students, to provide specialization in selected agricultural innovations and to transform the trainees into model frontline agripreneurs. So far seventeen batches had successfully completed their programme from three main centres namely, College of Agriculture, Vellayani, College of Agriculture, Padannakad and Centre for e-learning, Vellanikkara. The programme included sixty days training programme followed by an apprentice programme of six months. In the first two months of training focuses on sculpting the inbuilt and acquired skills, and also to impart more skills to the students. This skill training phase is mainly focused on five modules viz. soft skill, entrepreneurship

development, enterprise attachment, computer skills and project formulation and planning. Main soft skills related to employability are communication skills, personality traits, self-discipline, and leadership approaches (Manishankar, 2009).

The six months apprentice programme focus on allotment of candidates to different departments in the university and Kerala state department of Agriculture for which they are awarded a stipend of Rs 6000 (Six thousand only) per month. The participants were selected by a team of scientists led by the project leader after conducting a preliminary written test. The final selection was based on interview. The details of modules are presented below:

Sl.No	Module	Duration	Purpose
1	Soft skill	15 days	Give exposure to the VHSE certificate holders to improve their efficiency and elevate their self confidence through enhanced communication skill, problem solving skills as well as gain ability in risk management and manage time as a limited resource.
2	Computer skill	10 days	Develop ICT enabled communication cum information processing skill among the participants
3	Entrepreneurship development	15 days	Capacity building of the participants as an entrepreneur in the various dimensions of agri enterprise encompassing planning, project formulation, pilot testing, promotion and marketing, as well as a best team player to achieve common and self goals towards success.
4	Enterprise attachment and feedback	10 days	Provide hands on exposure to the participants in various identified agri-enterprises and selecting a group based viable project from among the enterprise in which he had got exposure.
5	Project formulation and report formulation	10 days	Provide hands on exposure to the participants in various identified agri-enterprises and gaining experience in the management of the enterprise and selecting a group based viable project from among the enterprise in which he got exposure.

II. METHODOLOGY

Finishing school programme was started in 2012 at three main centers of Kerala Agricultural University out of which College of Agriculture, Vellayani comprises most of the batches followed by College of Agriculture, Padannakad and centre for e-learning, Vellanikkara. Vellayani and Padannakad were the major centres selected for the

study. A questionnaire was sent to all the 350 candidates who successfully completed the finishing school programme during the period 2012 to 2018, for response. Out of the 350 candidates who had successfully completed the programme, 245 candidates responded through post and/or email.

III. RESULT

Out of the 350 candidates who have successfully completed the programme, 245 candidates have responded through post and/or email. Out of this 245 candidates who responded, 33.91 per cent were pursuing higher education,

22.85 per cent were employed, 15.91 per cent were going for Public service commission(PSC) coaching and unemployed each. It was also revealed that 11.42 per cent of the candidates were self employed [Table 1].

Table 1.Distribution of candidates based on their present status

Sl.No	Categories	F	%
1	Self employed	28	11.42
2	Employed[Private/Government]	56	22.85
3	Pursuing Higher education	83	33.91
4	PSC coaching	39	15.91
5	Unemployed	39	15.91
Total		N=245	100

F-Frequency, %-Percentage

It is clear from table 1 that, more number of candidates prefers to go for higher education (33.91%) whereas only 11.42% is involved in self employment. The perusal of table 1 ,also pinpoints that 22.85 percent of the candidates received employment in either private or government sectors. 15.91 percent of the, candidates attend PSC coaching whereas another 15.91 percent continues to be unemployed or rather sitting idle at home.

Distribution of respondents in self employed category

The study revealed that the self employed respondents were engaged in various enterprises. The perusal of table 2 revealed that majority (42.85 %) of self employed respondents were engaged in farming/livestock/fish culture start ups, 21.42 per cent of respondents were operating mechanic shop, bakery or stationery shop in rented

building followed by 17.85 per cent who were tailors, food caterers and drivers who have own vehicle.

This trend might be due to agricultural background of southern Kerala, influencing them to take up occupation retained by their fore fathers/ancestors. The training in soft skills during the course of finishing school programme might have given them good exposure to plan, coordinate and control actions in business and also equipped them to identify the areas and start enterprises that fetch them good profit. The apprentice programme during the course could have familiarized them with several departments of Kerala Agricultural University and State department of Agriculture. The exposure received during the finishing school programme from Department of Post harvest technology and Agricultural engineering might have helped them to start ventures in those areas.

Table 2 Distribution of respondents in self employed category

Sl.No	Categories	F	%
1	Farming/livestock/fish culture	12	42.85
2	Rented shops-Mechanic shop, bakery, stationery	06	21.42
3	Tailors/designers	05	17.85
4	Food catering/drivers who own vehicle	05	17.85
Total		N=28	100

F-Frequency, %-Percentage

Distribution of respondents in employed category

It is clear from the Table 3 that majority of the respondents (35.71%) were daily wage employees in KAU and other related institutions followed by 16.07 per cent of respondents working

as lab technicians, 14.28 per cent as farm assistants, 12.50 per cent as Lower Division Clerks (LDC), 10.71 per cent as car showroom attendees, 7.14 per cent as Life Insurance Agents and 3.57 per cent were working abroad.

Table 3 Distribution of respondents in employed category

Sl.No	Categories	F	%
1	Daily wage employees in KAU and other institutions	20	35.71
2	Lab technicians	09	16.07
3	Farm assistants	08	14.28
4	LDC clerks	07	12.50
5	Car showroom attendees	06	10.71
6	Life insurance agents	04	07.14
7	Working abroad	02	03.57
	Total	N=56	100

F-Frequency, %-Percentage

Many of the respondents were working as car showroom attendees and Life Insurance Agents and this might be because of the systematic training given to them in presentation, communication and organizing modules of finishing school program. Many of the respondents were Lower Division clerks (LDC), which might be because of the basic trend of preference towards government sector jobs amongst the younger population in Kerala. Only a less per cent of respondents were working abroad. It might be because of the less propensity of individuals from southern Kerala desiring to work abroad rather than Northern Kerala as most of the respondents belonged to south Kerala.

Distribution of respondents pursuing higher education

It is clear from the Table 4 that majority of the respondents (66.66 %) pursuing higher education were studying for Bachelor of Arts Degree / Masters Degree / Bachelor of Science where as 21.68 per cent of respondents were pursuing diploma courses whereas 14.45 percent of them joined for other vocational courses. The finding is in compliance with the basic protocol of desiring for higher education in Kerala than mastering specific skills in depth.

Table 4. Distribution of respondents pursuing higher education category

Sl.No	Categories	F	%
1	Pursuing B.A/M.A degrees/B sc. Degrees(both distant and regular)	53	63.85
2	Diploma	18	21.68
3.	Other vocational courses	12	14.45
	Total	N=83	100

IV. CONCLUSION

The ultimate objectives of finishing school programme were to enhance the employability and entrepreneurial ability of the participants. The programme could bring 34.27 percent of the participants respondents up to this category which clearly shows the positive impact of finishing school in achieving its objectives.

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