

## **Strengthening Student Community to Sustain Community Development Initiatives**

**By- Dr. Dilip S. Patil\***

*“Development begins at home and sustained at educational institutions.”*

In Indian Universities like University of Mumbai, extension education has been included in the curriculum for community development. The objective of the program is to strengthen the students community to sustain community development. In these programs, the students are enrolling at large to make the community aware of its purpose, process and benefits. The programs are implemented under the instruction of Chief i.e. concerned Director of the University with the help of nearly 20,000 Degree College Students and their 400 Degree College Teachers from 200 Colleges by six academic projects which are related to information technology, entrepreneurship & career guidance, status of women in the society, population education, industry orientation and open schooling.

### **Extension Education and Community Development:**

Extension Education is the extension of knowledge and material resources of the college to the rural community and vice-versa to gain insights into the socio-cultural realities with a view to reflecting these in the curriculum of higher education.

To state it simply it is the application of classroom knowledge in the rural community for its benefit with the simultaneous learning of socio-cultural realities by the students through a participatory approach. This process of the application of knowledge results in the generation of further knowledge.

Extension Education and Field Outreach activities always work to encourage people to improve their conditions in all dimensions of their lives. The methods of Extension education and Field Outreach activities arise from proven principles and the most effective Extension Educators and Field Outreach activists use a variety of teaching methods.

### **The structure of Extension and Field Outreach activities:**

The structure of Extension and Field Outreach activities include effective management strategies which brings interaction with the community under use of participatory approach technique where students apply classroom knowledge for the benefit of the community. The colleges participating in the activities are grouped on zonal / district basis where the colleges are representing their Talukas, the small division / block of district. The schedule of the activities is prepared by every participating college. The students are divided in groups and sent to the villages / areas for conducting the activities. The representative from the head institution i.e. from the University is accompanying the students for monitoring the activities and report to the Head who present his report to the University. Further, the University presents its report to the Government

---

\* Dr. Dilip S. Patil is Professor & Director, in the University Department of Lifelong Learning & Extension, University of Mumbai, Maharashtra, India; e-mail: dilipsp45@gmail.com

who frames the measures for the development of the sector.

Under its field outreach activities, the student volunteers visit weekly markets, village fairs and festivals and form small scale shops of local commodities. The students actually go to the community and with the help of various activities such as street play, poster exhibition; seminars, rallies, research convention etc make the people aware of developmental measures for the agricultural sector and its subsectors which require excellent management skills. The posters, songs and slogans are specially designed for the purpose in local languages where they **reach to the unreached sections** of the society. In the presence of College Teacher and the Field Coordinator, the activities are performed for the benefit of the society. The feedback is also taken from the community. Most of the time the beneficiaries are also interviewed by the students with pre-designed questionnaire. Once the problems are identified, the measures for development are taken by the University with the help of government and non government organizations. This field outreach work has been considered for academic credit for students for their final examination. In addition, the students are getting field experience which is important for their personality development. The students also make the people aware of developmental measures for the agricultural sector and its subsectors with the help of various activities.

Extension work is most successful when it involves learners in its programs so thoroughly that they set their own goals, apply new ideas and receive feedback from others about their progress. Extension does not dictate how people will solve problems or make decisions for them. Rather, it fosters the democratic ideal of self-governance by encouraging each person or group to choose the best among a variety of options. The development of people is the ultimate goal of Extension education and Field Outreach activities.

The objectives of introduction of extension work are absolutely related to the Community Development initiatives which are especially focusing the development of student community. They are as follows:

- To provide career orientation and job orientation to the college students.
- To bridge the knowledge gap between the College, University and the Community.
- To enhance employability of the students and ultimately the society.
- To provide opportunity to students for development of marketable work skills.
- To acquaint the students to apply classroom knowledge for the benefit of the community.
- To make students aware of social problems in the community
- To enable the students to find their socio-cultural roots.

### **Extension and Entrepreneurship Skill Development Programs for Community Development:**

The entrepreneurship skill development programs are the integral part of Extension Education helping to develop creative community development approaches to enhance student's personality. These community development programs are useful to provide research-based information, teaching new knowledge and developing skills, helping them to improve self motive

and ultimately training to generate income to earn their livelihood. They also involve field work in respect of a subject of study to provide work experience and give opportunities of participation in programs for enhancing employability and technology skills.

The students are motivated to participate in financial and computer literacy short term courses where eminent faculties and experts from the field guide these students and sharing their views. This is done in online mode where every student is provided computer and internet facility through its computer lab. In addition to these theoretical inputs, the students are given the practical to develop their hardware and software skills. Field trips / visits are organized to make them aware of actual proceedings in the industry. In addition, they are offered internship in reputed industries for more practice. In this way, their entrepreneurship skills are developed step by step. Finally they have to succeed in written, oral and practical tests. Every possible opportunity has been offered to students to enhance their employability skills through skill development programs to build up and strengthen students community.

### **Extension and Sustainable Development Attitude for Community Development:**

Extension stake holders share responsibility for entrepreneurship programs. Entrepreneurship skill development is based on sustainable development model. Sustainable Development Model respects the environment and maintains its purity and stability. Under this, entrepreneurship skills are developed in such a way that the students are motivated to look after the nature first while doing any activity of earning the sources.

The aim of these programs is to align social needs and environmental benefits through more efficient production methods which may decrease the wastage rate. The students from rural areas are mostly involved as they are more inclined towards the environment. They are given the opportunity to visit the village industries to learn the process of production from raw material in addition to learning theory from the syllabus. All the possible efforts are made by the students to maintain the strategy that saves environmental energy for the existence of every natural resource. The part of syllabus involves the theory of sustainable development whereas students participating in extension work activities actually perform the task to cure the environment such as tree plantation campaign, water purification and by organizing save water and energy campaign. The motto of the activity is to save and sustain the purity of environment that may include water, fuel, trees, mining, soil, metal etc. It is an approach of entrepreneurship for loyal services to the society without harming natural resources. In addition to environment friendly feature, the students are familiarized with some of the concepts and theoretical knowledge related to cost savings and quality improvements in products, demand flow, production flow and profit motive in the business.

The activities organized by the students are related to any sector viz. agriculture, horticulture, mining, fishing, construction, technology etc. Every co-curricular activity should care for environment before thinking about production, customer needs and profits. These

activities may include lecture series by the experts, paper presentations during the seminars, exhibitions of articles and products and poster making creating awareness to the public. All the activities entirely depend upon the team work of students and teachers of the colleges. Therefore, time and energy devoted to team development make for effective development and coordination among programs for the benefit of the society. Far from diminishing individual initiative, teamwork requires each team member to contribute ideas, feelings and skills in an atmosphere of mutual respect and open communication. Cooperation can achieve complex goals more creatively and more easily than individuals alone can do. Thus, the Extension is closely related to environment that generates sustainable development attitude.

### **Extension and Management Skills for Community Development:**

The following structures of Extension and Field Outreach activities are helpful for effective management strategies:

- Interaction with the community
- Creating awareness for empowerment of the people for improving their quality of life.
- Use of participatory approach technique.
- Application of classroom knowledge for the benefit of the community.
- Utilization of the manpower, material and knowledge resource of the educational institution for the benefit of the community and vice-versa.

Learning and developing management skills is the foundation of every extension work activity. The extension activities require management skills whereas these skills are developed through extension activities which give variety of experiences beneficial for the development of managerial skills among the students. To organize these activities, the volunteers require skills of management including time management, resource management and event management skills. The extension activities are mostly field outreach activities where the volunteers have to go to the community to make people aware of social issues and solutions to solve them. They have to disseminate the information about social issues in community with various supporting activities such as rallies, street plays, seminar, exhibition and community meetings which require excellent management skills to communicate with volunteers, permissions for the locations of the programs, preparations of resource material, designing of posters, banners, leaflets, appropriate use of multimedia, hospitality arrangements for participants and to tune with traffic problems. Hence, Management is one of the essential components of every extension activity. While performing all these tasks together, students' managerial skills are developed under the guidance of teachers who also offer various opportunities to the students including the opportunities to prepare the schedule, drafting of invitations, letters and reports, publicizing these documents with various communication media and advance technology related media etc. These opportunities enhance the skills like self motive, self reliance, communication skills ensuring the enhancement

in- built skills like self motivation, self confidence and eliminate reliability on others. All these tasks also develop team work attitude and cooperation among the students. Hence, an extension develops these various skills among the students and strengthens student's community.

### **Extension work and Economics for Community Development:**

Extension renews itself continually by reviewing its purpose and priorities. When faculty members take risks with new or rediscovered educational methods, Extension grows and maintains its relevance to the needs of people. To strengthen the student community, it is necessary to make students understand the economy and its perspectives at entrepreneurship level.

The Extension activities are functioning on no profit motive but on the motto of the welfare of the society. To sustain the Extension activities at zonal and national level, the financial support is generated among the students through their participation charge which is used for the welfare of the society. The projects developed under it, educate the students to initiate their own business by providing experiences of economical expertise. The students are motivated to run their small scale business during the educational hours as a part of educational activity where buying and selling of food and non food items are performed on marginal profits. In this way they are given the opportunity to earn while they learn. The participants have to learn the economy and economical skills to set up their own small scale industry relevant to their areas of interest and skills for which they are motivated by the teachers and the fellow learners. Working with groups rather than simply with individuals is more cost-effective, allows more creativity and encourages the students to be trained with economics aptitude. In this way student learn the entrepreneurship and get experiences and enhance their skills.

In this way, Extension Education is an academic tool to execute entrepreneurship, economics and management. Extension education implements Community Development Programs based on entrepreneurship, economics and management through the Colleges under the skill development initiative of the Government of India. It looks after the need for increasing the capacity and capability of our dealing with skill development programs to meet the ambitious target of producing skilled and talented manpower for the country. With these concepts, it is proposed to meet the target by motivating the students in colleges while doing their regular educational courses of general education to undergo some of their desired skill development programs through the Skills Development Education Initiative [SDEI] of the country. It will benefit to widen required methodological skills to build up man power and at the same time making it possible to deliver skill education to the society.

To reflect new knowledge based on Community Development Programs in the entire curriculum system and in each discipline, it is essential that the University System absorb the concept of Extension Education as an integral component of its academic programmes to strengthen the students' community to sustain Community Development initiatives.

