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Significant of VIth Dean Committee Report over Vth Dean Committee Report in Agricultural Education

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Abstract

The VIth Dean Committee Report (CDR) was published in 10th September, 2024 by Indian Council of Agricultural Research, New Delhi, India. The CDR was frequently published to uptake the educational curricula and related thing. The Vth Dean committee report was gave the detailed information about administrative regulation related with its specification; while due to preparation of ICAR model Act-2023 these types of specification were omitted from VIth DCR. The most significant changes in VIth DCR from Vth DCR are introduction of new degree programmes such as Bachelor of Science Agriculture (Honours) Natural Farming and Agribusiness Management, flexibility in degree programme, introduction of new courses, changes in student READY programme, introduction on online courses and changes in elective courses with their allocation and inclusion of skill enhancement courses (SEC). The flexibility in degree programme helps in providing three types of certification which includes UG-Certificate, UG-Diploma and UG- Degree with duration of 1, 2 and 4 years, respectively. The introduction SEC in VIth DCR acts as substitute for Module based activities in which was there in Vth DCR. The significant changes in courses and their curricula indicate that, they were updated with considering the national education polivy-2020. In nutshell, impletion of VIth DCR will be worthy considering significant changes made with sufficient weightage given to the technical education and skill enhancement.

Keywords: Skill enhancement courses; elective courses; natural farming; agribusiness management

The Dean Committee Report (DCR) a complete and most authentic source of information about course curricula for different agricultural graduate degree programme and also up gradation of agricultural education to meet the need of present educational system demand. The DCR is also an important document which provides the detailed guidelines to be followed for accreditation of college by ICAR and other concern authority (state agricultural university and central agricultural universities). In another way, CDR is one of the best attempts

to enforce the agricultural education institutions to follow a set of regulation and insure the quality of education system. The DCR also have administrative values due to its reference by the accreditation committee while providing different grants and facilities to the colleges. The DCR also insure the establishment of basic infrastructure of college to have practical experience and training or workshops to the graduate students thereby increase their academic excellence and competence in present day diversified and complex business/job/entrepreneurship relations. Considering the huge information being cited in the CDR and changes made over the earlier Vth DCR, the attempt was made in this article to overview changes in VIth DCR over Vth DCR with their significance.

Introduction of new degree programmes

The VIth DCR is out stand from the earlier DCR with respect to introduction of Bachelor of Science Agriculture (Honours) Natural Farming and Agribusiness Management. It is also proposed in VIth DCR to have post-graduate programme in natural farming which underlines the importance of natural farming approach in agricultural education. The natural farming movement in India is tracking the same path which was followed earlier by organic farming as a concept in India two decade back. Besides, its positive impact of ecology, food chain and food web, it has significant scope due to availability of several indigenous techniques with some of them being cited and highlighted as Indigenous Technical Knowledge (ITK). Hence forth, developing the well trained human resource will be a prime importance where national agricultural education research and extension framework. The natural farming programme also remain the same level of flexibility as that of B.Sc. Agri. with regards to multiple entry and exit with provision of ‘UG-Certificate Natural Farming’ after completion of first year along with 10 week internship and ‘UG-Diploma (Natural Farming)’ after completion of second year along with 10 weeks internship beside ‘B.Sc. (Hons) Natural farming’ after successful completion of four year degree programme. This will helps increasing the skilled human resources in bio-input production which is one of the important area of entrepreneurship development and also have both private and public investment which will expected to increase further due to increasing area under both natural and organic farming. During entire degree programme 176 credits need to be completed which are divided as 111 credit hours for core courses, 9 credit hours for multi-disciplines courses, 6 credits for value added courses, 8 credits for ability enhancement courses, 12 credits for skill enhancement courses, 20 credits for student READY courses (Rural Entrepreneurship Awareness Development Programme), 4 credits for non-gradual courses and 10 credits for online courses (Mass open online courses).

In case of Agribusiness management, the flexibility in multiple entry and exit is insured. Allocation of UG-Certificate after completion of one year with 10 weeks of internship; while



UG-Diploma after completion of 2 year with 10 week of internship. After successful completion of 4 years B. Sc. (Hons.) Agribusiness Management degree is allocated. The business orientation is agriculture important considering increase in in-situ/ on-farm preparation as well as commercial production of organic input/ bio-inputs. As the same time, there is need to development of entrepreneurship based farming practices to march with the change market scenarios. The market chain from farmer to consumer is long with many interlayers which reduces the farmer share in consumer money. Therefore, there is need to increase market orientation along with production practices by the farmers. For this they need to be imparted with such specialized training as well as for large size farms, human resources with specialization in agricultural business is needed. Therefore the graduate degree in agribusiness management is worthy. The total credits in the entire degree is 181 which includes major core courses (80 credits), minor core courses (32 credits), multi-disciplinary courses (9), value added courses (6), ability enhancement courses (8), skill enhancement courses (12), Project/ student READY / training (20 credits), non-gradual (4 credits) and online courses (Mass open online courses) (10 credits).

Flexibility in degree programme: The flexibility in degree programme is one of the most significant outcomes of the degree programme. The multiple entry and exit system was introduced in graduate degree programme with allocation of certificate of completion of a given year/ course schedule three times in entire degree programme. This flexibility is also increase the change of introducing internship in degree programme. This will helps in imparting skilled to the student even after completion of one year or two year and make them a skill human resource. Besides that linkage formed between education institute and the several public/private organizations will be helpful in employing the student after certificate/ diploma/ degree programme. In most the disciplines with four year degree programme, the certificate of completion of one year along with 10 weeks of internship is given. After completion of two years along with 10 weeks internship programme diploma is allocated. In earlier case, the diploma college were exit different with slight variation in the course curricula and their content. Allocating such degree after two years to the students registered for degree programme will impose to maintain higher quality in education by diploma college as well as there will be sufficient competition among institution which also increase competence among the students. Besides that, this will also reduce the unnecessary establishment of separate diploma colleges. One major important reason for restricting of courses is allocation of multiple certificate/diploma/ degree programmes so that students getting certificate and diploma programme will get sufficient exposure to the courses which impart needful knowledge before allocation of degree. The shifting of most of core courses during early years and shifting of all



elective courses in third year of only in 6th semester will also for allocation of degree programme.

Introduction of new courses (Including deletion of courses/ merging of courses/changing course title and status of course)- For B.Sc. Agri.):

Changes in student READY programme: The student READY programme was modified both in Vth DCR as well as VIth DCR. IN Vth DCR, a new components of different modules each carrying 10 credits (0+10) were introduced and student have to register for any two such module for 20 credits during 8th semester of degree programme. These modules are production technology for bio-agents and bio-fertilizer, Seed Production and Technology, mushroom cultivation technology, soil, plant, water and seed testing, commercial beekeeping, poultry production technology, commercial horticulture, floriculture and landscaping, food processing., agricultural waste management, organic production technology and commercial sericulture. The objective of this modules were to specialization of student is selected module by which they can get strength to start business and part in a business related to particular module subject VIIth semester, rural agricultural work experience (RAWE) programme involving village attachment for 8 credits, institute attachment for 5 credits, plant clinic of 2 credits, agro-industrial attachment for 3 credits, orientation for 1 credits and report preparation of 1 credits with total 20 credits. So, in Vth DCR, the entire 4th year is of practical oriented and students are not involved in any of the course work and /or written examination and are also not working in the college. In VIth DCR, this is modified to a great extend with all elective courses in 7th semesters and complete elimination of module based activities in 8th semester. The Earlier RAWE offered in 7th semester was shifted to 8th semester. The important reason for elimination of module based activities is the introduction of skill enhancement courses which is more or less covering the module based activities mentioned in Vth DCR.

Introduction on online courses: First time and large exposure of agricultural education system in India to online methods of teaching-learning activity is during COVID-19. This was the forced due to COVID-19 pandemic; while it imparted a huge exposure there by learning different aspects of online methods of teaching. The technological up gradation is one of the major societal interventions which is realized from availability and large scale use of mobile for different activities. The cost effective availability of technological gazettes, increasing number of enterprises on online mode, availability of large and quality study materials, access to and formation of different databases by ICAR and other institutions as well as private institution and most important liking of students for online study material is and will further increase the role of online platforms in agricultural education. In this regards there is need to attach our formal education of different degree of agriculture to online education. Hence,



allocation ten credits to online courses will be worthy.

Elective courses: In Vth DCR the elective courses were offered from 4th to 6th semester which 9 credit (3 credits to each course with three courses) to address the subject of part of subject which is not covered in the entire degree. There are 12 number of courses enlisted as elective courses in Vth DCR. In VIth DCR, the credit hours of elective courses are increased to 20 with five courses (each having four credits). All the elective courses will be taught in VIth semester alone and not to any other semester. The increase credit indicates that the purpose of elective courses in only to cover the subject or part of subject whose knowledge but also to give in depth knowledge about a particular subject or part of subject. The range of subject covered is very large which again provide more opportunity of covering large section of academic activities. The sources were modified to meet the need of present educational standard. Besides that, due to large number of options, there is more opportunity for selection of courses based on student's choice, competence of faculties and facilities/ mandate/ local scenarios/ agro-climatic condition.

Skill enhancement courses (SEC): This is new group of courses introduced in agricultural education VIth DCR which was not present earlier DCRs. Being the technical education, there is need to impart the technical knowledge with practical significance and market/ job/ business orientated skills. This will also make the student directly enter in different sectors and/or business with very less any further separate training/education. In VIth DCR there are provision of 6 SECs with 12 credit each carrying 2 credits. All the credit hours are allocated to practical in all SEC which again emphasize the hand on exercise, preparation of inputs and different on-field activities. It is also mentioned that, SEC will be selected by the host institute based their strength and consideration was also insured for the location specification and agro-climatic condition as well. There are seven SEC mentioned in DCR viz., bio-fertilizer and bio-pesticide production, mushroom production technology, seed production technology, post-harvest processing technology, beneficial insect farming, horticulture nursery management, plantation crops production and management. By introducing SEC it is also cleared by CDR that, the practical credit hours offered in the graduate degree programme in different courses are not sufficient to impart the value added technical education to address present technical requirements.

Academic regulation, administration and minimum guidelines for establishment of colleges: The VIth DCR, major emphasis is given on the course curricula as well as modification in graduate programme with consideration of NEP-2020; while the several sections has been removed with giving reference of ICAR Model Act-2023 and various guidelines and order released by ICAR time to time. The significant importance to different



types of education modification, course reconstructing and addition of new dimension of online courses are useful. The information related with academic governance and administration is not included which reduce the diversion of attention from academic courses to other administrative things. In case of Vth DCR, large amount of information is given on regulation; while might be due to lack of documents like ICAR Model Act-2023. The document will be very lengthy if any such regulation will be a part of CDR which again makes it less readable and less preferred due to large volume as well as less attention by academicians towards this report considering the more of administrative guide book.

National Education Policy-2020 (NEP-2020): The NEP-2020 prepared by Ministry of Human Resource Government of India describe the specification for schooling education and higher education with respect to different administrative regulation, infrastructural specification, human resource development activities for teachers and faculties as well as essentials for ensuring the high quality education standards. The agricultural education and its significance were also highlighted in NEP-2020 with emphasis on capacity building and quality improvement in agriculture and allied branches through development of skilled graduates with best technological education, research and market based approach.

In nutshell the changes in education system at frequent interval is needed and DCR will be a good forum to discuss and made such changes in agricultural graduate programme. This up gradation will also serve the purpose of technical skill oriented education with use of modern technologies.

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