

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A study was undertaken by University Students Advisory Bureau (USAB) of University of Madras during 1992 -94 on "A comparative study of Specialised Courses and Conventional Courses in Universities in Tamilnadu", under the sponsorship of the Department of Science & Technology (DST), Govt of India. The objectives of the study were primarily to inventorise the Specialised courses offered by the Universities based in the Tamil Nadu state and investigate their potentials and the outputs in terms of employment to the alumni of the Universities.

There are fifteen Universities in Tamil Nadu nine of which offer 45 Specialised courses. These come under ten disciplines of study. The study was to assess the relative merit of specialised courses, and enlistment of those conventional courses which are akin/allied to specialised courses. Questionnaires containing socio-economic profile and academic components intimately related to education and training were used to collect information from Universities and alumni.

As per records of the Universities and the agencies of the state,, the enrolment of students during 1980-1992 in specialised courses of nine Universities was 6196. And, it was 6238 in the conventional courses. Access to reach all 6196 alumni by fast and sure mode of communication was made with the assistance of Universities and employment exchanges, industries etc.,. Only 400 of them from each category of courses could be consolidated and used as samples for the study.

The analysis of the alumni chosen for the study lent to conclude that 66.67% of the students of urban centres availed the specialised courses. It was true with the conventional courses too. Social and economic status of the parents of the alumni had significant influence in admission, employment and other benefits acrued out of specialised courses to the alumni. The graduates of the conventional courses were less advantaged in job market than their contemporaries in the specialised courses.

The advantages gained by over 75% of the respondents of specialised courses included (1) availability of jobs immediately after completion of the study with salaries exceeding Rs.4000 per month ; (2) opportunity to secure job through direct recruitment organised by placement centres and scientific and technical departments in the State and

at the Centre and (3) Promotion of self employment (enterpreneurship). The conventional course graduates were handicapped with programmes of study with limited venues for jobs and unable to draw parallels with their contemporaries in the specialised courses. The major barriers are that the course modules and their contents are absolute and non-specific to any type of jobs.

There were several suggestions and comments received from the respondents. The need for change in the syllabi of all the subjects of study under conventional courses was stressed. Similar stress from among the graduates of specialised courses was marginal (<25%). Orientation training to both the categories of students was demanded by majority of the respondents. This would as commented by them bridge the gaps existing between classrooms and work place. The establishment of information centres at places away from the Universities were demanded by 75% of the respondents of both the courses of study. The dissemination of news about Specialised courses and demands in the job market were inadequate and rural based students were especially unable to avail the benefits.

The state government and the Universities should devise strategies to amend the system of education with introduction of modern sciences and creation of facilities for practice and pre-service training.