Original Research Paper　　　　　　　　　　**Commerce**

NEED TO INTEGRATE ICT IN COMMERCE HIGHER EDUCATION IN RATNAGIRI DISTRICT OF MAHARASHTRA STATE – STUDENTS PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT　Ratnagiri is a coastal district belonging to Konkan region of Maharashtra state, situated on the western coast of India. It has north-south length of about 180 kms and average east-west extension of about 64 kms. Sahyadri hills surround it in the east beyond which there are Satara, Sangli and Kolhapur districts, Raigad district in the north, the Arabian Sea in the west and Sindhudurg district in the south. The district comprises of 9 tehsils/talukas. Presently there are 21 UG level Commerce colleges in the district. In the recent past, student enrollment for Commerce faculty has increased drastically. But the commerce education is not yet developed to suit the business needs here and globally too. It lacks practical approach to the business environment. ICT integration needs to be enhanced in various aspects specifically administration, teaching-learning process as well as research and evaluation.

INTRODUCTION:

There are 21 senior commerce colleges in Ratnagiri district. Some of these colleges are about more than 20 years old. Due to inherited poor financial condition and ignorance about educational importance by parents, students here still face the problem to seek education. Commerce education is getting established slowly but has not achieved the major objectives on higher education such as satisfied employability, growth and industrial development.

The syllabus of commerce education has outdated content which needs to be replaced with modern concepts. So, it lacks pragmatic approach. The technology i.e. ICT is not implemented totally in teaching, learning evaluation and research. It is very difficult to get qualified, skillful and motivated staff for commerce colleges. There are various reasons for these which have been addressed by the researcher in his findings out of the views of the Principals of these colleges/eminent institutions.

The study aims at understanding commerce education from the angle of the head of the institutions, their perspectives and vision too. The researcher feels that their views can throw light upon important problems and issues of commerce education which can be further studied by others to come up with suggestions and solutions.

• CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND:

Commerce is the activity of buying and selling of goods and services between two or more individuals or organizations and/or combination thereof. The system includes legal, economic, political, social, cultural and technological systems that are in operation in any country or internationally. Thus, commerce is a system or an environment that affects the business prospects of economies.

Commerce Education here includes education delivered in UG colleges of Ratnagiri District. Commerce Graduates here refers not necessarily as B.Com. but all the degree education under Commerce and Management Faculty too.

Management is the key to achieve the objectives individually and/or organizationally with commitment, dedication and team spirit.

Industry is an economic activity concerned with the processing of raw materials and manufacture of goods in factories to produce semi-finished and finished goods.

Information Communication Technology is an umbrella term that

includes any communication device or application, encompassing: radio, television, cellular phones, computer and network hardware and software, satellite systems and so on, as well as the various services and applications to convert data i.e. facts and figures into required information.

E-Commerce in brief is commercial transactions conducted electronically on the Internet. In comprehensive manner it comprises of three aspects E-Market, Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) and Internet Commerce. It is a newly introduced specialization in Commerce faculty by some universities in Maharashtra to equip the Commerce students with latest technology in their field.

Skill development is the process of identifying your skill gaps and developing and honing these skills. It is important because your skills determine your ability to execute your plans with success.

• LITERATURE REVIEW:

Ratnagiri District Gazetteer (2006) is helps to understand the history, development, facts and figures of Commerce and Industry in Ratnagiri district of Maharashtra State. It focuses on various aspects of higher education in Commerce.

• OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH STUDY:

The said research study was carried out with following objectives in view:-

1. To study the views on Commerce education by the Under Graduate Commerce Students from commerce colleges in Ratnagiri district of Maharashtra.

• GEOGRAPHICAL AREA OF THE RESEARCH STUDY:

The geographical area of the research study consists of all 9 tehsils/talukas of Ratnagiri district of Maharashtra state.

• HYPOTHESIS:

The main hypothesis of the said research paper is as follows:

H 1 Commerce graduates in Ratnagiri district strongly desire to learn ICT based Commerce education that will make them employable and open new horizons for research activities.

• RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

With the above objectives kept in mind the instructed Questionnaire Method was adopted through a draft questionnaire cum survey discussed and filled by the Under Graduate (UG) Commerce students of the senior commerce colleges. In all, 523

students from 15 colleges in all 9 Tehsils / Talukas of Ratnagiri district were contacted and communicated personally by the researcher. Its composition was as follows –

Table 1: Sample Size of the Survey

Sr. No.	Name of Tehsil/Taluka	No. of UG Students
1	Khed	87
2	Mandangad	33
3	Dapoli	52
4	Chiplun	63
5	Sangameshwar	67
6	Lanja	35
7	Rajapur	34
8	Ratnagiri	90
9	Guhagar	62
Total		**523**

Source: Primary Data

The Secondary Data was collected from the publications of colleges and reports of Mumbai University with reference to Commerce Colleges.

For the present research study, the data pertaining to the above objectives was collected and the literature was reviewed on the topic concerned. The literature was collected by visiting online libraries and websites. Some Government websites were also visited for getting office record and statistical data.

- **NECESSITY OF ICT BASED COMMERCE EDUCATION IN RATNAGIRI DISTRICT OF MAHARASHTRA STATE – STUDENTS PERSPECTIVE:**

The Commerce education is developing at a faster rate in Ratnagiri district, but it fails to achieve the business/industry expectations. After contacting and analyzing the response from 523 respondents (UG Students) all over Ratnagiri district various observations regarding current scenario of commerce education were recorded as follows:

1. **Adequate Funding** – Adequate funding is crucial for ICT based quality infrastructure, learning ambience and research facilities. Higher education requires top precedence in union and state budgets to ensure expected globally competent rejuvenation. Government must provide sufficient funding for commerce education. Novel approaches and avenues of resource mobilization need to be explored. This includes funding from alumni, corporates as well as public-private partnerships. Government and public funding has got to be linked with institutional performance as well for the paramount efficiency.

2. **Curriculum** – Curricular reforms are quite essential promoting internationalization of curriculum. It should be devised in such a way that future knowledge workers and skilled labor force will be nurtured through it. It should address global issues and concerns; at the same time, it shall not diverge from the promotion of Indian values. Curriculum should be as such which prepares the learner as global citizen ready for global competition. It also needs to be dynamic and flexible facilitating the students as lifelong learners and contributors to their profession. It should foster creativity and innovation.

The university should initiate courses which are supplementary to Government of India initiatives – 'Make in India', Digital India', 'Skilled India', 'Swachh Bharat Abhiyan' as well as 'Smart Cities'. Incorporating skill based development and ICT oriented commerce education is an urgent need of the time. Multidisciplinary courses need to be launched across all the disciplines.

3. **Faculty** – Faculty (Teacher) is fundamental to any transformation in education. Consequently, any change we hope in higher education has its roots in the modification in the teaching fraternity. Dr. Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan had said, "The very best minds in the country should be teachers." On the contrary teaching is considered as the last career option in our country. There is a need to attract and sustain quality teachers and create motivating milieu for excellence in their performance, especially in districts like Ratnagiri where student talent galore.

It is the prime responsibility of our higher education system to offer best possible facilities, support and motivation for their career escalation and ensure continual faculty development through assorted high standard initiatives. Commerce teachers in Ratnagiri district need to be groomed in line with these requisites for new era. Service conditions of the faculty need to be redesigned. When the thrust is on skill-oriented and competency-based education, academic qualification must not be obligation. Rather competent professionals from relevant sectors shall also be preferred as faculty members. Job assurance amidst the teaching fraternity has led to some sort of complacency which is hindering the efforts for quality assurance. So, performance based incentives and promotions need to be established. Teachers need to be oriented and trained regarding their new roles and responsibilities.

4. **Teaching-Learning Process** – A fresh and innovative approach to teaching-learning process needs to be opted. Novel pedagogy has to be framed that will propose adequate time, opportunities and challenges for self-advancement of the learner. Learners need to be highly motivated to empower them to be competent for competitive world. They shall be presented a conducive environment and adequate opportunities to acquire superlative knowledge, skills and competencies. Students need to be encouraged and empowered to take responsibility of their learning outcomes.

Activity based learning, experiential learning, synergogy, heutagogy, blended learning, web-based learning, project-based learning shall be favored by the teachers. We need to revamp the existing structure of teaching-learning to address diverse choices and learning styles of the students.

5. **Technology** – Technology is the thrust of knowledge obsessed economy. We must develop and adopt innovative for us to be the knowledge creators rather than mere knowledge consumers. Intensive use of ICT is inevitable for Commerce education to be of global standard. Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) for administration, Educational Technology Center (ETC) for teaching-learning, Blended Evaluation Model (BEM) for examination, etc. are the fine examples for ICT integration.

Online courses, hybrid learning, flipped classrooms, lessons on demand, online exams, e-assessment, interactive boards and visual presenters, cloud based tools, mobile learning as well as social networking are such enterprises which will certainly prove instrumental for the renovation of commerce education here.

6. **Research and Innovation** – Research and innovation should become the core constituent for the transformation of commerce education. University has to offer motivation, infrastructure and support for undertaking research on contemporary issues relevant for society, industry and body of knowledge. Government and industries should collaboratively invest in research and innovations to provide world class infrastructure, facilities, laboratories, library services, technology along with human resource.

7. **Value Inculcation** – In the era of globalization, university should not sacrifice core Indian values and ethics. India is acknowledged to offer values to the world. It is the prime responsibility of our higher education institutions to foster Indian values and emphasize character formation of the students to serve society and nation. Commerce education has got to uphold value based education to nurture the students to

become good human beings for building sustainable societies and civilization.

• CONCLUSION:

Leading issue ahead of commerce education is not sheer expansion but also quality assurance promoting employability. This can be resolved effectively and efficiently with ICT based Commerce education. Rising expectations and challenges cannot be confronted without a total overhaul of the structure of management of higher education institutions. A transformative and innovative approach is required to realize the ambition of globally competent Commerce education.

Resolute and allied efforts are required from all the stakeholders i.e. academia, government and industry. We require the higher education system that is modern, liberal and adaptive to the demands and aspirations of changing society, industry and economy.

If we can offer competency- based, skill-oriented, market focused as well as socially-relevant innovative programs suited for 21st Century, we will be top knowledge generators and not mere knowledge users. Comprehensive strategy concerning structural, infrastructural and pedagogical turnaround is required which will ensure world class status of Commerce education.

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