

Research Paper



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STRENGTHENING VOCATIONAL HIGHER SECONDARY EDUCATION (VHSE) WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO TRIVANDRUM DISTRICT OF KERALA STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study has been conducted to find out ways and means to strengthen Vocational Higher Secondary Education (VHSE). Vocationalisation of education is targeted at the enhancement of employment potentials of the VHSE students. This vocational education should help the VHSE schools and students to be more productive and creative. VHSE should prepare the students for competencies in different trades and empower them to enter into various occupations or self-employment. The stakeholders of the VHSE programme should pay more attention to motivate and inspire the VHSE students towards entrepreneurship so that they may keep the spirit of entrepreneurship in becoming entrepreneurs immediately after their VHSE course. The VHSE schools while teaching the students can have production centers and give the students practical experience while they are undergoing VHSE. By doing so the students can be given confidence in a specific trade and the schools conducting the VHSE can become self-supported by producing various products and services related to the VHSE courses the school has opted for. This will help the VHSE students to go out of the schools with confidence that they can become prospective entrepreneurs. For the present study 600 final year VHSE students were selected as the sample size from rural, semi urban and urban schools of Trivandrum District of Kerala State.

KEYWORDS: Vocationalisation, enhancement of employment, competencies, self employment, stakeholders, Self-supported VHSE Schools.

1.1 VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

The Vocational Education was started in India in 1976-77 under the stream 'Vocationalisation of Higher Secondary Education' in schools/institutions of general education. Vocational education was introduced in the State of Kerala with the main objective of equipping the students for various identified occupations. It was introduced as part of the National Policy of Education with the vision of empowering the students with occupational skills in securing jobs along with education.

In Kerala State, the Vocational Higher Secondary Education (VHSE) was introduced in 1983–84 in 19 schools. In 1985 – 86 VHSE was introduced in 73 schools offering courses in 27 occupational subjects. In the years 1997 – 98, there was an increase in the number of VHSE schools; 310 Vocational Higher Secondary Schools with a total number of 814 sections in 45 subjects. In the State of Kerala currently there are 389 Vocational Higher Secondary Schools giving vocational training in 42 subjects through 1100



departments. At present Vocational Higher Secondary Education of Kerala State offers nine VHSE branches namely; Humanities and Business and Commerce, Engineering and Technology, Paramedical, Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, Fisheries, Physical Education, Home Science. Admissions to all these faculties are based on the admission procedures framed by the Vocational Higher Secondary Education Department.

The VHSE aims mainly in imparting the necessary skills in the students which are essential for the production and service oriented occupations. The vocational education also has the objective of enhancing and developing the entrepreneurial skills and competencies among the students required in initiating, organizing and running a business. 'Self-Sustainable VHSE Schools' which is a creative and innovative concept, integrates entrepreneurship and vocational education. This will increase the learning enthusiasm among the students, provide a base to train them and will be a source of finance for the VHSE School. Implementation of this concept will enhance employment opportunities among the youth who are undergoing VHSE and will equip the students with the skills to venture into entrepreneurship or empowering them to be employable or prosper after graduation.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

VHSE is a distinct stream of Education intended to prepare the students for certain identified occupations. A careful analysis of the VHSE programme reveals that, it acts as a ground where the students can develop their job skills, entrepreneurial skills and motivation to become entrepreneurs. However the question arises, why then the VHSE students are not entering into income generating activities or involve in those occupations by which they can utilize their skills and the resources of the state for economic growth and development. Although entrepreneurship has very seriously been recognized as vital to the country's economic stability and growth where youth can play a very crucial role, studies show that very few of them venture in to this area. Hence the present study is an

attempt to identify and examine the ways and means to strengthen the VHSE so that the students undergoing the VHSE would be encouraged to enter in to entrepreneurship.

1.3 OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

*The study was conducted with the specific objective to identify and examine the ways and means to strengthen Vocational Higher Secondary Education (VHSE) so that the students undergoing the VHSE would be encouraged to enter in to entrepreneurship with special reference to Thiruvananthapuram District.

1.4 METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLING DESIGN

The type of research methodology adopted in this study is descriptive in nature and the primary data was used for the study. The principle of randomness was used for the sampling design. VHSE in Kerala offers 42 different trades which are grouped into four streams. It is found that, vast differences were identified in the number and distribution of schools offering these 42 trades throughout Kerala State and practically it was not easy to include all of them in the sample. So the sample respondents were chosen from those schools offering VHSE courses in Trivandrum District of Kerala State for this study. In total 3198 students were undergoing final year VHSE course during the period under study. In this 1462, 960 and 776 students were studying in schools situated in rural, semi urban and urban areas respectively. To give a geographical balance to the sample, 600 final year VHSE students were selected from the schools situated in urban, semi urban and rural areas proportionately. The size of the sample is approximately 19 per cent of the total population.

1.5 PROFILE OF THE SAMPLE RESPONDENTS

The personal profiles of the respondents are presented in Table 1. The analysis of the personal profile will reveal the socio cultural status of the respondents. The socio cultural status will also used for the analysis of the entrepreneurial skills of the respondents.

Table 1 Profile of the Sample Respondents

Profile	Particulars	No. of Respondents	Percentage	Total
Age	17 years	426	71.0	600
	18 years	174	29.0	
Gender	Male	363	60.5	600
	Female	237	39.5	
Religion	Christian	162	27.0	600
	Hindu	323	53.8	
	Muslim	115	19.2	
Community	SC/ST	15	2.5	600
	OBC	579	96.5	
	FC	6	1.0	
Location of School	Rural	274	45.7	600
	Semi Urban	180	30.0	
	Urban	146	24.3	
Location of Home	Rural	280	46.7	600
	Semi urban	227	37.8	
	Urban	93	15.5	

Source: Primary data

Table 1 reveals the profile of the respondents. It is evident that 71 per cent of the respondents are 17 years old. Respondents with 18 years constitute 29 per cent. The prescribed age for the second year VHSE course by the VHSE board of Kerala State is 17 years. It was observed that due to the failure of the students in their previous classes or late admission to the school 29 per cent of the students are having 18 years. The study also reveals that 60.5 per cent of the respondents are male and 39.5 per cent of the respondents are female.

The distribution of sample respondents in respect of religion shows that 53.8 per cent of the respondents are Hindus, 27 per cent constitutes Christians and 19.2 per cent are Muslims. The analysis of the community to which the respondents belong reveals that 96.5 per cent of the respondents belong to OBCs and 2.5 per cent belongs to Scheduled Caste/ Scheduled Tribe category and forward class community constitute 1 per cent.

The analysis of the respondents as regards the location of the schools where the students are studying reveals that 45.7 per cent of the students are studying in rural schools, 30 per cent of the students are studying in the semi urban schools and 24.3 per cent students are studying in the urban schools. It is also evident from Table 1 that 46.7 per cent of the respondents are residing in rural area, 37.8 per cent of the respondents are residing in semi urban areas and 15.5 per cent of the respondents are residing in urban areas.

1.6 STRENGTHENING OF VHSE

Factor analysis tool is used to analyse the ways and means to strengthen the VHSE. This analysis is made through the rotated factor matrix which reveals that, there are four major factors which are extracted from twenty three variables which are suggested as the ways and means to strengthen VHSE. The findings of the rotated factor analysis are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Strengthening of VHSE

Factors	F1	F2	F3	F4	h ²
The content of the Vocational subjects should give the students an in depth knowledge both in theory and practical.	.942	.213	.010	.008	.714
The content of the Vocational subjects should be sufficient enough to develop the skills related to the trade the students are undergoing.	.927	.245	.001	.006	.800
The vocational subjects should encourage the students to enter in to self employment activities.	.914	.303	.003	.003	.847
Irrelevant courses or outdated courses or low profile job oriented courses should be abandoned and new and relevant courses should be added.	.909	.313	.022	.007	.867
Periodic updation in the content of the syllabus should be made which can enhance the knowledge and technology about the recent developments.	.902	.264	.001	.008	.893
The text books supplied to the students should be revised at the regular interval taking in to account the recent development.	.894	.167	.005	.017	.871
Students should be provided with practical oriented assignments and projects. Sufficient practical sessions should be included in the content of the VHSE course.	.891	.295	.004	.011	.816
VHSE curriculum must allow the schools to evaluate the students on the basis of the skills acquired by them.	.878	.150	.004	.014	.836
The VHSE students should be given entrepreneurial competencies	.268	.885	.024	.022	.886
An Entrepreneurial Culture and spirit can be imparted in VHSE schools apart from the teaching of entrepreneurship or the vocational subjects if the VHSE schools can start production centers.	.229	.880	.031	.036	.861
VHSE schools should be given practical training by involving the students in the production of goods or services in their respective trade during their study.	.215	.877	.041	.036	.936
The students may be given training to market the products or service in which they are involved. This will help them to gain knowledge in marketing of goods or services.	.239	.874	.034	.038	.907
The students may be taken to the business establishments of the successful entrepreneurs to experience the realities of the business.	.294	.871	.037	.002	.847
The students may be asked to conduct a survey in their areas of their study to know the present situation in the market	.274	.860	.039	.011	.930
The students should be given information about the government assistance for the entrepreneurs and the procedure for starting the business	.243	.851	.014	.015	.906
The schools should have good library to refer the books related to VHSE subjects and other interested topics. VHSE Schools should provide sufficient and modern lab facilities to do the practical.	.221	.259	.803	.009	.807
Also the VHSE Schools should provide better language labs to improve the communication skills of the students. Entrepreneurial Development Cells should be created to motivate the students about entrepreneurship.	.447	.006	.753	.275	.662
Students should be given mentoring sessions by the teachers and experts to provide guidance to the students on entrepreneurship, subjects they have chosen and self-employability.	.401	.054	.665	.114	.447
The VHSE schools may create the production or service centres to give hands on training and to involve the students in their respective trades.	.011	.014	.663	.322	.154
VHSE Schools should have experienced and permanent teachers, lab assistants and instructors who are experts in handling the vocational subjects and practical	.000	.018	.060	.852	.796
The teachers who are handling vocational subjects should be given refresher training to update their knowledge and experience.	.005	.026	.104	.787	.477
The teachers who are involved in production or service training should have the latest knowledge in the respective trade	.001	.009	.119	.890	.185
The teachers should have sufficient knowledge in entrepreneurial education and training, business plan writing, marketing, finance, Human resources and production.	.020	.021	.015	.522	.458

Extraction Method : Principal Component Analysis Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization

Source : Primary Data

The above Table 2, exhibits the rotated factor loading for the twenty three statements (variables) for strengthening of VHSE. It is noticed from the following

Table 3 that all the twenty three statements have been extracted into four factors.

Table 3 Factors to be considered for Strengthening of VHSE

Sl. No	Factors	Eigen Value	Percentage of Variance	Cumulative Percentage of Variance
1.	Up gradation of Vocational subjects	16.705	34.342	34.342
2.	Promotion of entrepreneurial training and experience	15.286	31.424	65.766
3.	Infrastructure and supporting facilities	2.846	5.852	71.618
4.	Empowerment of teaching staff	2.004	4.120	75.738

Source: Computed Data

The Table 3 shows the executed factor analysis results in four important factors namely; 'Up gradation of vocational subjects, Promotion of entrepreneurial training and experience, infrastructure and supporting facilities and Empowerment of teaching staff'.

The first two factors are 'Up gradation of Vocational subjects and the promotion of entrepreneurial training and experience' since its eigen values are 16.705 and 15.286 respectively. The per cent of variation explained by these two factors are 34.342 and 31.424 per cent respectively.

The next two factors are 'infrastructure and supporting facilities and the empowerment of teaching staff, since their eigen values are 2.846 and 2.004 respectively.

1.7 VARIABLES IN THE UP GRADATION OF VOCATIONAL SUBJECTS FACTOR AND ITS RELIABILITY

The up gradation of vocational subjects factor consists of eight variables since their factor loading in this factor are higher than the other factors. The overall reliability of the variables in this factor has been estimated with the help of cronbach alpha. The results are given in Table 4.

Table 4 Up gradation of the Vocational Subjects

Sl. No	Variables	Factors Loading	Communality	Cronbach's Alpha
1.	The content of the Vocational subjects should give the students an in depth knowledge both in theory and practical.	.942	.714	0.759
2.	The content of the Vocational subjects should be sufficient enough to develop the skills related to the trade the students are undergoing.	.927	.800	
3.	The vocational subjects should encourage the students to enter in to self employment activities	.914	.847	
4.	Irrelevant courses or outdated courses or low profile job oriented courses should be abandoned and new and relevant courses should be added.	.909	.867	
5.	Periodic updation in the content of the syllabus should be made which can enhance the knowledge and technology about the recent developments.	.902	.893	
6.	The text books supplied to the students should be revised at the regular interval taking in to account the recent development.	.894	.871	
7.	Students should be provided with practical oriented assignments and projects. Sufficient practical sessions should be included in the content of the VHSE course.	.891	.816	
8.	VHSE curriculum must allow the schools to evaluate the students on the basis of the skills acquired by them.	.878	.836	

The Table 4 shows that, the factor loading of the variables in the 'up gradation of vocational subjects' factor varies from 0.878 to 0.942. The communality value is identified as higher in the case of the statement; 'Periodic up gradation in the content of the syllabus should be made which can enhance the knowledge and technology about the recent developments.' since its communality value is 0.893. The included eight variables in the factor explain it to an extent of 75.90 per cent since its Cronbach Alpha is 0.759.

1.8 VARIABLES IN THE PROMOTION OF ENTREPRENEURIAL TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE FACTOR AND ITS RELIABILITY

The variables in the 'promotion of entrepreneurial training and experience' factor consist of seven variables. The factor loading of the variables in this factor and its communality values are drawn from the factor analysis. The overall reliability has been tested with the help of Cronbach Alpha. The results are given in Table 5.

Table 5 The Promotion of Entrepreneurial Training and Experience Factor and its Reliability

Sl. No	Variables	Factors Loading	Communality	Cronbach's Alpha
1.	The VHSE students should be given entrepreneurial competencies	.885	.886	0.736
2.	An Entrepreneurial Culture and spirit can be imparted in VHSE schools apart from the teaching of entrepreneurship or the vocational subjects if the VHSE schools can start production centers.	.880	.861	
3.	VHSE schools should give practical training by involving the students in the production of goods or services in their respective trade during their study.	.877	.936	
4.	The students may be given training to market the products or service in which they are involved. This will help them to gain knowledge in marketing of goods or services.	.874	.907	
5.	The students may be taken to the business establishments of the successful entrepreneurs to experience the realities of the business.	.871	.847	
6.	The students may be asked to conduct a survey in their areas of their study to know the present situation in the market	.860	.930	
7.	The students should be given information about the government assistance for the entrepreneurs and the procedure for starting the business	.851	.906	

Table 5 shows that, the factor loading of the variables in the 'promotion of entrepreneurial training and experience' factor varies from 0.851 to 0.885. The higher communality value is noticed in the case of the statement 'VHSE schools should give practical training by involving the students in the production of goods or services in their respective trade during their study.', since its value is 0.936. The included variables in this factor explain it to an extent of 73.60 per cent since its Cronbach Alpha is 0.736.

1.9 VARIABLES IN THE INFRASTRUCTURE AND SUPPORTING FACILITIES FACTOR AND ITS RELIABILITY

There are four variables noticed in the 'advancement of supporting facilities' factor. The Cronbach Alpha is computed to find out the overall reliability. The factor loading of the variables in this factor, its communality and Cronbach alpha is given in Table 6.

Table 6 Variables in the Infrastructure and Supporting Facilities Factor and its Reliability

Sl. No	Variables	Factors Loading	Communality	Cronbach's Alpha
1.	The schools should have good library to refer the books related to VHSE subjects and other interested topics. VHSE Schools should provide sufficient and modern lab facilities to do the practical.	.803	.807	0.727
2.	Also the VHSE Schools should provide better language labs to improve the communication skills of the students. Entrepreneurial Development Cells should be created to motivate the students about entrepreneurship.	.753	.662	
3.	Students should be given mentoring sessions by the teachers and experts to provide guidance to the students on entrepreneurship, subjects they have chosen and self-employability.	.665	.447	
4.	The VHSE schools may create the production or service centres to give hands on training and to involve the students in their respective trades.	.663	.154	

Table 6 shows that, the included four variables in the advancement of supporting facilities factor explain it to an extent of 72.70 per cent since its Cronbach Alpha is 0.727. The factor loading of the variables vary from 0.663 to 0.803. The higher communality is noticed in the case of 'The schools should have good library to refer the books related to VHSE subjects and other interested topics. VHSE Schools should provide sufficient and modern lab facilities to do the practical', since its value is 0.807.

1.10 VARIABLES IN THE EMPOWERMENT OF TEACHING STAFF FACTOR AND ITS RELIABILITY

There are four variables in this factor. The internal consistency of the factor is tested with the help of Cronbach Alpha. The results are shown in Table 7

Table 7 Empowerment of Teaching Staff Factor and its Reliability

Sl. No	Variables	Factors Loading	Communality	Cronbach's Alpha
1.	VHSE Schools should have experienced and permanent teachers, lab assistants and instructors who are experts in handling the vocational subjects and practical	.852	.796	0.715
2.	The teachers who are handling vocational subjects should be given refresher training to update their knowledge and experience.	.787	.477	
3.	The teachers who are involved in production or service training should have the latest knowledge in the respective trade	.890	.185	
4.	The teachers should have sufficient knowledge in entrepreneurial education and training, business plan writing, marketing, finance, Human resources and production.	.522	.458	

Table 7 reveals that, the factor loading of the variables in the ‘empowerment of teaching staff’ factor varies from 0.522 to 0.890. It reveals that, the highly correlated variable is the statement; ‘The teachers who are involved in production or service training should have the latest knowledge in the respective trade’ since its factor loading is 0.890. The higher communality is seen in the case of the statement; ‘VHSE Schools should have experienced and permanent teachers, lab assistants and instructors who are experts in handling the vocational subjects and practical , since its communality value is 0.796. The included four variables explain it to an extent of 71.50 per cent since its Cronbach Alpha is 0.715.

1.11 IMPACT OF FACTORS LEADING TO STRENGTHEN VHSE TOWARDS ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The present study has made an attempt to examine the degree of influence of factors leading to strengthen VHSE towards entrepreneurship. The impact

has been made with the help of multiple regression analysis. The fitted regression model is:

$$y = a + b_1x_1 + b_2x_2 + \dots + b_6x_6 + e$$

Whereas,

y = Factors encourage the VHSE students to enter into entrepreneurship

x₁= Score on Up gradation of Vocational subjects

x₂= Score on Promotion of entrepreneurial training and experience

x₃= Score on Infrastructure and supporting facilities

x₄= Score on Empowerment of teaching staff

b₁, b₂,..., b₅= Regression co-efficient of independent variables

a = Intercept and

e = error term

The result of multiple regression analysis is given in Table 8

Table 8 Impact of Factors Leading to Strengthening VHSE towards Entrepreneurship

Sl. No	Variables	Regression coefficient among the respondents			Pooled Data
		Rural	Semi-urban	Urban	
1.	Up gradation of Vocational subjects	0.1612*	0.2785*	0.2895*	0.2670*
2.	Promotion of entrepreneurial training and experience	0.1824*	0.2340*	0.2533*	0.2286*
3.	Infrastructure and supporting facilities	0.1180*	0.2275*	0.2415*	0.1943*
4.	Empowerment of teaching staff	0.2535*	0.1851*	0.1923*	0.1989*
	Constant	0.7458	0.7529	0.7685	0.7583
	R ²	0.7681	0.7841	0.7978	0.7895
	F Statistics	8.8565*	8.9897*	9.5561*	9.4172*

Source: Primary data

*Significant at five per cent level

Table 8 reveals that the significantly influencing factors which would strengthen VHSE towards entrepreneurship in rural area are ‘Up gradation of Vocational subjects, Promotion of entrepreneurial training and experience, infrastructure and supporting facilities and the Empowerment of teaching staff’ factors since their respective regression co-efficient are significant at five per cent level. A unit increase in the above said factors result in an increase in the factors which may encourage the VHSE students to enter into entrepreneurship in rural areas by 0.1612, 0.1824, 0.1180 and 0.2535 units respectively. The change in the factors explains the degree of influence on the VHSE students to enter into entrepreneurship to an extent of 76.81 per cent since its R² is 0.7681.

In the case of the respondents in semi-urban area, a unit increase in the factors namely the ‘Up gradation of Vocational subjects, Promotion of entrepreneurial training and experience, infrastructure and supporting facilities, Empowerment of teaching staff, Enhancement of Entrepreneurial skills’ factors result in an increase in the factors encourage the VHSE students to enter into entrepreneurship unit by 0.2785, 0.2340, 0.2275 and 0.1851 units respectively. In the case of the respondents in urban area, it is increased by 0.2895, 0.2533, 0.2415 and 0.1923 units respectively. The changes in the factors explain the degree of influence on the VHSE students to enter into entrepreneurship in the urban area to a higher extent (79.78 per cent) than among the respondents in the semi-urban area (78.41 per cent).

1.12 FINDINGS

- ◆ As regards the highly significantly influencing factors which would strengthen VHSE towards entrepreneurship in rural area are ‘Empowerment of teaching staff’ and ‘Promotion of entrepreneurial training and experience’ since their regression coefficients are 0.2535 and 0.1824.
- ◆ Among the semi-urban respondents the highly significantly influencing factors which would strengthen VHSE towards entrepreneurship are ‘upgradation of vocational subjects and ‘promotion of entrepreneurial training and experience since their regression coefficients are 0.2785 and 0.2340.
- ◆ The highly significantly influencing factors which would strengthen VHSE towards entrepreneurship among the urban respondents are ‘upgradation of vocational subjects’ and ‘promotion of entrepreneurial training and experience since their regression coefficients are 0.2895 and 0.2533.
- ◆ On the whole the ‘upgradation of vocational subjects’ and ‘promotion of entrepreneurial training and experience’ are the two highly significantly influencing factors to be considered for strengthening the VHSE towards entrepreneurship.

1.13 SUGGESTIONS

- ✎ As the respondents from the urban and semi-urban areas are of the opinion that the VHSE subjects needs to be upgraded, the VHSE board should make necessary changes in the subject taking in to account the current development.
- ✎ The syllabus needs to be strengthened as regards the trade related skills to be imparted to the VHSE students.
- ✎ The students undergoing the VHSE should be encouraged to enter in to self employment.
- ✎ The text books given to the VHSE students should be revised at the regular intervals.
- ✎ Practical assignments and projects should be given to the students to understand the subject and to acquire skills in the specific trade.
- ✎ The VHSE students should be given entrepreneurial culture and the entrepreneurial competencies may be imparted.

- ✎ VHSE schools should be given practical training by involving the students in the production of goods or services in their respective trade.
- ✎ Successful entrepreneurs may be invited to share their success stories in order to motivate the students to enter in to entrepreneurship.
- ✎ VHSE students may be asked to conduct a survey in their areas of their study to identify the business opportunities and the local resources available to start a business unit.
- ✎ The VHSE schools can start production centers and become self-supported. Moreover, ‘earn while learn’ scheme may be introduced and the students who are involved in this may be given a portion of the profit for their involvement. This will motivate the students to become entrepreneurs once they complete their studies.
- ✎ VHSE Schools should have Entrepreneurial Development Cells to motivate the students to enter in to entrepreneurship. The Entrepreneurial Development Cells should organize awareness camp and it should assist the students to start the income generating venture/ ‘Start-up’ programmes.
- ✎ The VHSE Schools can also organize Vocational Expo programmes to provide opportunities to showcase their skills, talents and abilities.
- ✎ The VHSE schools should start /strengthen counselling and career guidance centers to direct the VHSE students through the right path in their career and personal life.

1.14 CONCLUSION

The study reveals the need for strengthening VHSE to motivate the VHSE students to enter in to entrepreneurship. The stake holders of VHSE must realize the need for strengthening the VHSE taking in to account the objective for which it was created. It is also understood from the study that, the Self-Supported VHSE Schools’ which is a creative and innovative concept, integrates entrepreneurship and vocational education. This will highlight the concept of ‘learn, do and earn’ and will increase the learning enthusiasm among the students. Implementation of this concept will enhance employment opportunities among the youth who are undergoing VHSE.

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