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150 YEARS OF CELEBRATING THE MAHATMA

To
Prof. Rajnish Jain
Secretary, UGC
Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg, New Delhi 110002

14th August 2020

Dear Sir

This is in connection with the notice on the UGC main page, undated of July, 2020 asking for comments on the Learning Outcomes based Curriculum Framework and the sample curriculum prepared for B.A. (Political Science). This was accessed on 13th August, 2020 from the website:

https://www.ugc.ac.in/ugc_notices.aspx?id=Mjg5NQ==

The documents are also available at:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1B_-TG80oO_B3i2wkNNnmslY9vu6N3XkU?usp=sharing

At the outset, we applaud this step of desiring a clear "learning outcome" of the program as well as of courses. However, most of the learning outcomes stated in your documents are passive capabilities such as "a better appreciation", "able to explain" and so on. The most common is to "come to know"! While these are important skills, the ability of being change agents require a different set of academic tools and material. The absence of this is reflected in the absence of operational words such as the ability to "analyse", "plan", "guide" or even "report".

We wish to make the following comments. These are with the perspective of the typical student of B.A. (Political Science) who will come from a state university and who will most likely, whether she likes it or not, end up working within the state. Thus while "national" or "global" issues are important, it is also important to cater to this eventuality and also to the states and their needs. Keeping these things in mind, it is useful to have a curriculum which is a combination of perspectives and theory as well as grounded-ness, relevance and actionability. The simplest route is to guide the students to explore their lived reality and engage with it professionally.

However, as of now, there is little room in the curriculum for state-level or regional content. In fact, the terms district, city or village do not even appear in the curriculum. Most states have a rich tradition of politics, welfare and development and the curriculum should be a vehicle to analyse and develop upon these.

We suggest that a modified document be prepared and have the following concrete suggestions in the preparation of this document:

1. The professional opportunities, where B.A. (Political Sciences) graduates may contribute, have not been fully explored. At the state level, many opportunities are now available, e.g., as program officers with various public or private developmental agencies, in Zilla Parishads as sector specialists, consultants to Water User Associations, private irrigation projects, or liaison officers with panchayat samiti departments such as PDS or public transport.

   These roles need a versatile understanding of politics in action at the state and district level, of various developmental agencies and their working, and finally of the key data sets.

   These situations should be carefully studied and listed and the training requirements analysed. The opinion of the states should be sought. The curriculum should be designed so that these requirements are visibly met.

   In other words, there needs to be a matrix which lists societal needs, old and new professions or roles, and matches these with the training. The current document does not offer such an analysis.

2. Given this, we would like to suggest one course every semester, i.e., 6 courses in total, to be state-specific. Possible course (names) are given below, details will be supplied upon request. We use Maharashtra as a running example.

   A. Maharashtra: Geography and Political History.
   B. Maharashtra: Economics, Sociology and Social Development.
   C. Organization of the State Administration.
   D. Key Datasets, Maps, Procedures and Work Visits.
   E. The District, the Village and Panchayat Raj.
   F. Study of a Development Department: Irrigation, Revenue and Forest, Public Health, Education etc.

To keep the overall balance, some courses in the proposed curriculum may be truncated, dropped or offered as electives. An example is "Theories of International Relations" in Semester 3.

Our suggestions will help in the overall development of the student and aid her in placing herself on a firm professional footing. Such a perspective, if followed in other curricula, will

help in formalizing the questions of development and make them more amenable to public understanding and analysis.

We have two final connected recommendations:

3. It is good that Policy Analysis is being proposed to be taught and "inquiry-driven learning" is being proposed. This makes the Case-Study done by students and guided by faculty members, a useful academic output. This should be considered.

4. Moreover, the Center and the States should be encouraged to routinely perform such studies and request universities and colleges to undertake these in their regions as professional services and paid research. These would help us understand key delivery problems and possible solutions. Even during this epidemic, there are many questions which are extremely relevant. For example,

   a. What is the average hospital stay (in days) for a hospitalized COVID patient in a given district?
   b. What fraction of COVID deaths have happened (i) at home or in institutions within the village/ward, (ii) at the taluka or district level institutions, in non-ICU or non-Oxygen wards, and finally (iii) in ICU or Oxygen-equipped wards.
   c. For a given district, what has been the tapestry and calendar of lock-downs and regulations, and what has been the impact of reported cases per day.

We need not elaborate on the current utility of such analyses, which are easily done by students and their institutions. In non-epidemic times too, such studies, for example, on the availability or quality of PDS, punctuality of public transport, access to drinking water, operating conditions of small enterprises, etc. will be instructive.

Let us know if you have any questions. We would be very eager to contribute.

Wishing you a Happy Independence Day!

Thank you and regards,

Milind Sohoni (CSE)
    and
Manoj Gopalkrishnan (EE), Suryakant Waghmore(HSS), Avijit Chatterjee(Aerospace), Bhaskar Raman(CSE), Raja Mohanty (IDC), Anush Kapadia (HSS), Puru Kulkarni (CSE)

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed here are those of the signatories and may not be shared by the concerned departments or the institute.