

**SCHEME OF COMMUNITY POLYTECHNICS - A
PRELIMINARY EVALUATION - 1983**

1. The Study

The Working Group on Technical Education recommended in 1978 that a few selected polytechnics should act as focal points for proper transfer of technology to the rural community and that they should be designated as community polytechnics. In pursuance of the recommendation, the Government of India identified 35 polytechnics and designated them as 'Community Polytechnics'. The scheme was initiated in 1978-79 with the approval of the Planning Commission.

Community polytechnics were envisaged to provide scientific and technological inputs for rural development programmes to accelerate the socio-economic upliftment of the rural population. The broad areas of their involvement included conduct of socio-economic surveys, project formulation, preparation of time bound plans of action for integrated rural development, development and transfer of appropriate technology, vocational training and manpower development, technical and other supporting services and dissemination of information on new technology. As per the guidelines issued by the then Ministry of Education and Culture, community polytechnics should function effectively in a number of areas like agriculture, housing and shelter, water supply and irrigation, promotion of agro-industries and small scale and village industries, road and village transport, electrification, development of human resources, vocational training and public health and sanitation. The scheme was financed with 100% Central assistance.

The Programme Evaluation Organisation(PEO), at the instance of the Planning Commission, undertook a preliminary evaluation of the working of community polytechnics. The study report was published in 1983.

2. Objectives

- i) To examine the role of community polytechnics in planning and project formulation, particularly vis-a-vis the Integrated Rural Development Programme, Village and Small Industries and other similar rural development programmes;

- ii) To study the transfer of technology undertaken by the community polytechnics;
- iii) To examine the programme of training and employment consisting of manpower development and employment generation;
- iv) To look into the mechanism of collaboration of community polytechnics with other agencies;
- v) To study the operational problems in full-filling the role and functions assigned to them; and
- vi) To make an overall assessment of the working of community polytechnics.

3. Sample Size/Criteria for Selection of Sample

All the 35 community polytechnics spread over 17 states were covered by the study. Data were collected by interviewing the heads and faculty members of the polytechnics. 423 beneficiaries were also interviewed.

4. Reference Period

The field work was conducted during the period September-December, 1981. The reference period for the study ranged from 1978-79 to December, 1981.

5. Main Findings

1. Though the scheme was approved by the Planning Commission in the year 1978-79, about one fifth of the total number of sanctioned polytechnics did not start functioning even by the end of 1981. This was mainly due to the procedural delays in the State Governments.

2. Many polytechnics complained of administrative delays in approving the working procedure of the scheme by the State Governments. Dissatisfaction was expressed about inadequate financial grants and delays in the receipt of funds, mainly due to cumbersome procedures.

3. Inadequacy of staff, lukewarm involvement of faculty members, lack of aptitude of the selected staff for their assigned task, absence of clear-cut job orientation for them and inadequate remuneration were the important staffing problems reported.

4. The major field problems faced by the community polytechnics included lack of leadership and initiative in villages, lack of proper motivation by the Government officials and the resistance of the villagers and local authorities for change and adoption of new technologies.

5. Community polytechnics did not play any significant role in systematic planning and project formulation in the areas entrusted to them. Socio-economic surveys of villages and preparation of resource inventories were carried out by only a few of them.

6. Only two community polytechnics attempted integrated area planning at the block level whereas 14 of them prepared individual project plans at the village level. These related to projects such as construction of gobar gas plants, road formation and drainage system, improved latrines, smokeless chullas etc. Majority of community polytechnics did not perform satisfactorily their role in planning and project formulation.

7. Transfer of technology and provision of technical services were attempted by the majority of community polytechnics. New technologies were transferred through demonstrations, lectures, individual discussions, exhibitions, etc. However, many of the new technologies were not disseminated sufficiently, perhaps because the cost involved was beyond the capacity of the rural poor.

8. Manpower development through training of village youths in various trades such as mechanics, welding, motor winding, carpentry and tailoring, was taken up by 27 out of 28 community polytechnics which had started functioning at the time of the study. Mechanics was the prominent trade in which youths were trained. However, only 11.6% of those who had successfully completed the training, were able to secure gainful employment or got self employed.

9. While all except 5 community polytechnics made attempts to establish some kind of co-ordination with other development agencies, they did not yield any other significant results except arranging financial assistance for themselves and sponsoring trainees. Their co-ordination with IRDPs too was insignificant. Community polytechnics did not extend the expected assistance to IRDPs in the identification of eligible households or in planning programmes.

6. **Major Suggestions**

Considering the infrastructure and expertise possessed by the community polytechnics and the fact that a period of operation of about 2 years is too short for such a scheme to show its full effect, it is suggested that these institutions must be properly harnessed so that they can provide yeoman service to the development of the rural population.