The Foundation Courses on Information Technology and Sciences which are going to be part of the curriculum of the FYUP seem to be having a disconnect with reality.

Information Technology first. An average undergraduate, and here we are not even speaking of those coming from elite public school backgrounds today, would find it tiresome that she is supposed to sit through classes where she is lectured on things like shortcut keys, WiFi, Bluetooth etc. In this day of smartphones and pervasive connectivity, this would seem as obsolete to her as teaching students to write with a ball pen in our times. She would find it even more tiresome, indeed hilarious that she is supposed to write an email to her teacher and a group as a project- this at a time when the neighbourhood kirana store owner is checking out status updates on Facebook during hot summer afternoons! Or connect her computer or mobile using WiFi! It seems that the "cabal" (yes, it must be a cabal since unlike the discipline courses, no one knows who designed the Foundation Courses) who designed this particular course is living on another planet. And to claim that courses such as these would "enhance the employability" of our students, is not just laughable but disingenuous.

The Science and Life course does a little better. Although it is not clear what the science component of this course is per se, there seems to be some effort to connect science with everyday life. However, teaching about fuses and water filtration to undergraduate students can only be described as dumbing down. The framers of this course might have looked at a Class VIII science textbook or even a "Jarnal Naalej" book used by schools to see that the students know these things-they have been drilled into them for years. Once again, the suggested projects truly take one's breath away. Most of them, at best involve a quick google search and at worst they are truly pedestrian. But then, this must be one of the ways our Vice Chancellor has in mind to make our students employable- maybe they can then claim on their CVs- can Google!

Though the objectives of the foundation courses are indeed lofty and include things like "…develop scientific temper…" etc, the reality is that there is a fantastic dumbing down of curriculum. Things which are taught in middle and high school are now being made a part of a mandatory curriculum for all. And the much touted project work, at least as envisaged will have only two outcomes- one possibly intended and one hopefully unintended. It will certainly enhance the ability of students to use Google and Wikipedia. More perniciously, it will lead to a mushrooming of shops selling "projects" at Patel Chowk. Maybe this will give the photocopy people an alternate employment in case the copyright case is decided in favour of the publishers! Unintended consequence no doubt!