

Skilled Workers Deserve our Respect

NSDC is mandated with the mammoth task of skilling or upskilling 150 million persons by 2022. As a member of the (NSDC's) Proposal Approval Committee, I take pride in being a part of this great effort; playing a small role in this huge nation building project.

In a way, each one of us – whether from the industry or any other stream – plays a role in skilling up people. I can say, with some satisfaction, that during my 48 years of professional life, I must have helped train a couple of thousand colleagues.

However, such numbers are minuscule when seen in the context of the skill deficit in the country. Also, the “greater need is at the bottom of the pyramid”. Such a gigantic task can only be accomplished through a PPP -SPV like the NSDC. One must give credit to those who have conceptualized the setting up of this institution.

Skilling is – to a large extent – about building “self-esteem” in people. I am reminded of a small ceremony we had in the PHD Chamber. Our 'Social Development Foundation' had embarked upon the new task of training girls from economically weaker sections of society to become 'health care support workers' and the first batch of about 30 had completed their course and also received job offers with salaries around Rs 5,000 per month. The pride on their faces, the sparkle in their eyes and the enthusiasm with which each one spoke had to be seen to be believed.

Within a few months, these girls had been transformed from being a “burden” on their parents to someone who could contribute to the family income kitty. They had come at par with their fathers and brothers and their place in the family – indeed the society – had undergone a metamorphosis. All of them appeared very confident of their abilities and the newly acquired skills. No longer would they be treated as “unwanted mouths to be fed”; instead they would get priority when it came to food or new clothes; their opinion would be heard in all family matters. Such was the effect of a short Skill Development Exercise.

Why do almost all parents in India harbour the desire to see their children get a BA degree? Ask anyone if they would want their son to become a carpenter or electrician and you would get an immediate refusal. They would rather want him to be a “graduate” and join some “office”. They know fully well that the guy would earn much less as a clerk and yet they don't want him to learn a vocation.

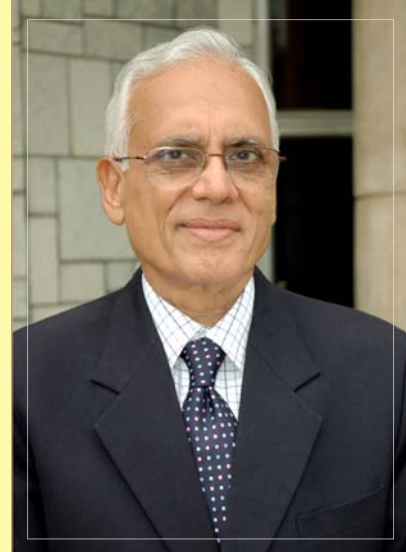
Why is it that in Germany, a plumber or a welder commands as much respect in society as a doctor or a lawyer – and probably earns the same amount or more – but in India there is a stigma attached to such “blue collar jobs”? Unless we can re-position these 'skilled technical jobs' at par with other professions and ensure the same level of esteem & pride in them, the whole exercise of filling up the huge Skill Gap may not succeed.

As someone said at a recent AIMA convention, "we are waiting for the day when matrimonial ads would read "Bride wanted for tall, dark and handsome welder or turner - instead of highly placed corporate manager or an IAS or a dentist.....". It is bound to happen someday, but we want it to happen now, in double quick time so that this dream of the nation – to upskill 500 million by 2022 – doesn't get shattered.

I think society has to work on this collectively and restore the same status to vocational skills as was enjoyed by the master craftsmen and artisans in the courts of erstwhile Rajas and Nawabs. Such changes will also ensure that the practitioners of these skills would become more 'professional' and would have a much greater sense of responsibility in the discharge of their duties. This ripple effect of greater emphasis on quality would cover all our manufacturing & services sectors and raise the bar for the quality of goods made in India. Talking of 'pride in one's job', I can never forget an incident in school. We were in a new class and the teacher had asked all students to introduce themselves briefly including "what our fathers did for a living". Amongst all the 'sons of sarkari babus, bank managers, doctors, engineers, zamindaars, factory owners & businessmen', one of our classmates stood up and said that his father was an “assistant shop keeper”! No one – including the teacher – understood what it meant. So he was asked to explain. Very reluctantly, the young Sikh boy told the class that his father was the *Munim* (accountant) at some one's shop but he was quick to add that “the shop couldn't run without his father and the owner depended a lot on him in all matters of purchase & sale of goods”.

At that time we made fun of our friend, but now I can see this incident as a fine example of both – the general lack of respect for a *Munim*, and the young boy's steadfast belief and pride in what his father was doing and how important his contribution was to the business where he was employed. As it happens, the Sikhs in our country are streets ahead of other communities when it comes to dignity of labour and pride in vocational skills.

The author is a Member of the NSDC's Proposal Approval Committee and former Secretary General of the PHD Chamber of Commerce & Industry.



Krishan Kalra

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HIGHLIGHTS

As on 30th September 2011

Training
Projects
Approved

34

Sector
Skill
Councils
Approved

8

Districts
Covered

171

of
Centers

988

*Includes mobile centres

Number
of Sectors
Touched

20

People to be
Trained in
10 Years

58.6

Million

From the desk of Dilip Chenoy

Dear Reader,

At the NSDC, we have always viewed the task of skilling as a kind of a marathon with each step leading us that much closer to the ultimate goal of establishing a robust framework for sustainable skill development initiatives in the country.

As I pen down my thoughts for this edition of the Newsletter, it is with some happiness that I can report to you that since our last interaction, the NSDC has taken several key initiatives that have ensured that our target no longer appears as just a distant speck on the horizon.

Over the past month, your organization has signed agreements with some of the biggest names of India Inc, approved funding for more training projects and Sector Skill Councils (SSCs), joined a growing formation of worldwide organizations engaged in the task of skilling, and also strengthened its monitoring process.

That apart, your organization has been able to convince the umbrella body for enterprises engaged in the retail arena - Retailers Association of India (RAI) – to take a greater interest in the evolution of a skilled workforce, by becoming a shareholder of the NSDC. RAI, whose proposal for setting up a SSC for the retail sector had earlier been approved for funding by the NSDC Board, has now become the 9th private sector shareholder of NSDC. It now joins ASSOCHAM, CII, FICCI, NASSCOM, SIAM, Confederation of Indian Textile Industry, Council for Leather Exports, and Gems & Jewellery Export Promotion Council that also hold equity stakes in NSDC. But before I delve more on the details of the business side of our working, I think some words are called for here on the Indian participation at the WorldSkills Competition held from October 5-8 in London.

As I had indicated in the last Newsletter, the Hon'ble Finance Minister, Shri Pranab Mukherjee, personally met and handed over mementos to each of the contestants from India, at a send-off ceremony that was organized at Delhi's North Block (which houses the Finance and Home Ministries) on September 30.

The 16 members who represented India in 15 disciplines at WorldSkills London 2011 surpassed all our expectations with their performance at the event. More importantly, though, participation at the WorldSkills event enabled us to get a very good idea of where our youth stand vis-à-vis their counterparts from the rest of the world as far as vocational skills are concerned.

The learning from London should help us going forward not just in preparing better for the next WorldSkills Competition in Leipzig (Germany) two years from now but in also working out a strategy to set the standards for our growth. On the sidelines of the WorldSkills 2011 competition, the NSDC also engaged with several international stakeholders to make them aware of what was happening in the Indian skills space. Our Chairman, Mr M V Subbiah, moreover, had a very productive meeting with the WorldSkills International President, Mr Tjerk Dusseldorp, where he articulated the NSDC's desire to organize a WorldSkills competition in India in 2021.

NSDC signed agreements with NIIT and Future Group to skill 14 million people for different vocations over a 10-year span. Each of these tie-ups would skill 7 million people and address the manpower needs of some of the most critical sectors of our economy. As a demonstration of our commitment, the NSDC has also taken an equity interest in the special purpose vehicles being floated by both NIIT and Future to undertake the projects, as part of our funding arrangement.

Another agreement has been signed recently with leading skills development company Laurus Edutech to train more than 1.1 million people in 10 years. As with the alliances with NIIT and Future, NSDC has taken equity in the SPV being floated for this venture.

At its last meeting on September 30, the NSDC Board approved the funding of two more training projects and SSCs for the banking, financial services and insurance (BFSI) and healthcare segments. The BFSI SSC project is being led by BSE, while CII is driving the healthcare SSC initiative. Details of our work on SSCs are separately available in the section earmarked for Sector Skill Councils in this newsletter.

To give a fillip to our SSC initiative, NSDC has now become a member of the International Network of Sector Skill Organisations (INSSO). INSSO exists to support the work of member sector skills organisations through the sharing of best practice and the provision of other services. Apart from India, INSSO Member Countries currently are Australia, Canada, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Pakistan and the UK.

The Vocational Skills Enterprise Plan Competition that I had written about in the previous Newsletter has attracted nearly 150 entries. We are in the process of choosing the most feasible ones from the proposals submitted for putting up before an eminent external jury, comprising the leading lights of India's business world, for the final selection to be made. India@ 75, a CII initiative, is co-organizing this competition with the NSDC. Indian School of Business (ISB) is the Knowledge Partner and Ernst & Young the Process Partner for this endeavor.

A series of initiatives are currently underway on the monitoring front about which I would let you know in coming issues. There are many other things happening simultaneously in other spheres, about which also I would prefer to keep the excitement alive at this stage. As in the past, though, we would look forward to your comments and suggestions on this edition of the Newsletter, and what you would like to know from us in future.



Dilip Chenoy
CEO & Managing Director

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WORLD SKILLS COMPETITION

The 16 contestants who represented the country in 15 disciplines at the just concluded WorldSkills Competition in London did India proud with their performance, with all of them securing over 70 per cent marks and three getting near the 80 per cent mark. V Shaheer, who took part in the Mould Making discipline, was the best performer among the Indian contestants.

Almost all of those who were witness to the show put up by the Indian participants at the ExCeL in London's Docklands area, where the competition was organized, could not but wonder how our boys and girls could do so well given the limited time that they had got to train and prepare for the event.

Many of the competitors from other countries at WorldSkills London 2011 had been training for at least a year or more on the job and undergone long hours of practice to give them a realistic chance of faring well at the competition. The same was not possible in our case this time around as putting together a team, arranging experts and organizing training within the short time available had to be given prime importance.

As has been recounted in previous editions of this Newsletter, NSDC was given the mandate of organizing the Indian participation at the London edition of the WorldSkills quite late in the day. Despite this, NSDC agreed to take on the responsibility in the belief that an involvement with WorldSkills could contribute in some measure to the process of benchmarking the skill sets of our youth vis-à-vis their counterparts in the rest of the world and understand how competitions such as these can help raise the status of vocational skills.

We have taken detailed notes of the areas where we need to improve so that India can put up a far better show at the next WorldSkills Competition slated to be held at Germany's Leipzig in 2013. Work on a strategy paper for WorldSkills 2013 has already started and we will keep you updated on its progress.



IISD Indian Institute of Skill Development

EXPANDING NEW HORIZONS

Indian Institute of Skill Development

Indian Institute of Skill Development (IISD) has been established with the primary objective to enhance the skills of our youth for meeting the growing demand for skilled manpower in the country. Its vision is to be a trusted organization for vocational training and deliver value to the students by providing effective knowledge and means which make them a valuable employee.

NSDC has decided to fund IISD for a skills development project that entails training almost 250,000 youth, many of them school drop-outs, in different trades across 7 states in north India over a 10-year period.

As part of the project, IISD would provide training in the automotive and light engineering, building construction, real estate, and retail segments through 50 centres, of which 18 would be housed in government-run Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs). The target trainees would be those who have not gone on to study beyond the 5th, 8th, 10th or 12th standards.

The arrangement envisages IISD linking up with CII for placement, certification and the identification of faculty. The business model is based on receipt of course and placement fees, and leveraging existing infrastructure as that of the ITIs.

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FINDING THE FUTURE

Hailing from a small village in the Solan district of Himachal Pradesh, Dev Anand had just appeared for his standard XII examination when he heard about the different job-oriented courses being offered by Indian Institute of Skill Development (IISD) that made it very easy for students to find employment on completion of the training. Keen to take advantage of the opportunities that are likely to come his way, Dev Anand enrolled for a 6-month CNC Turning course at IISD. The training that he undertook has enabled Dev Anand to find a job as a CNC Operator at a manufacturing unit based in Himachal Pradesh on a monthly salary of ₹ 4,600. Dev Anand says his present station in life is completely attributable to the training he received at IISD. Dev Anand's success subsequently prompted his brother to also take up training in CNC Programming from IISD. He, too, has since joined a company on a good pay.



Dev Anand

SECTOR SKILL COUNCILS

NSDC has of late received proposals for funding Sector Skill Councils (SSCs) for the electronics, foundry, and gems and jewellery segments in further proof of the heightened industry interest in forming SSCs for improving the quality of manpower employed in their respective domains. These SSC proposals, in addition to the others about which mention had been made in previous issues of the Newsletter, are now in various stages of due diligence. Some of them are also likely to come up for discussion at the next NSDC Board meeting in December 2011. We will keep you updated on their progress. Many of the SSCs that had been approved for funding earlier have either appointed CEOs or are very close to doing so as they get on with the task for which they are being established. NSDC has been in regular touch with all stakeholders in the SSC space to ensure that their establishment could be speeded up.

OUR PARTNERS



Meeting of Minds: (From left) NIIT CEO Vijay Thadani, NSDC CEO & MD Dilip Chenoy and NIIT President (Skill Building Solutions) Sanjay Bahl after the signing of the agreement between NSDC and NIIT on September 30, 2011. The alliance between NSDC and NIIT would lead to the skilling of 7 million people in diverse trades over a 10-year period.

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