

From the desk of Dilip Chenoy

Dear Reader,
We have been overwhelmed by your response to the inaugural edition of our Newsletter and would like to thank all those who sent in valuable suggestions on how we can make SkillMatters more interesting and relevant for our stakeholders.

We will try to implement the changes suggested in future issues.

We are happy to inform you that since I wrote last, we have made considerable progress in furthering the skills agenda in the country.

Many of our Partners have commenced operations and increased the geographic spread of their activity. More than 160 districts nationwide now host NSDC-funded centers imparting skills-related training.

We have received several interesting proposals from big and small corporate groups, which we are currently evaluating. Many institutions have expressed a keenness to establish Sector Skill Councils (SSCs).

At its latest meeting held this month, the NSDC Board has approved funding for four training projects and three SSCs. The four projects approved would together skill more than 14 million people over 10 years in a variety of sectors, that include agriculture, alternative energy, automobiles, building, construction and real estate, banking, financial services and insurance, electronics and IT hardware, healthcare, hospitality, telecom, IT/ITeS and organized retail.

The SSCs that received the nod would develop Labour Market Information Systems (LMIS) to assist in the planning and delivery of training, formulate a sector skill development plan, and maintain a skill inventory for the IT/ITeS, media and entertainment, and retail segments.

Accessibility and the low perception associated with skilling remain challenges that we will have to overcome to achieve our mandate of skilling 150 million people by 2022.

Dr Santanu Paul, who heads TalentSprint, has listed some wonderful ways in which we can take skill development courses to the masses in this edition of SkillMatters. We would welcome your feedback on this.

NSDC has already started taking some steps to glorify skills. I hope to tell you more about this in the next issue.

As always, we will look forward to your suggestions not just on this Newsletter but on anything that you think would help the NSDC better its act.



Dilip Chenoy
CEO & Managing Director

LAST MILE, LONGEST MILE

For all of us engaged in the skill development and employability mission, the last mile will be our longest and most challenging mile.

This is because much of our target population is on the other side of the last mile; we know they exist in large numbers but it is awfully hard to reach and serve them.

In a sense, our problem is similar to the challenge of financial inclusion - how can we possibly expect to financially include most people in a country of 600,000 villages if all we have are a mere 30,000 bank branches? Contrast this with 500 million cell phones in active use and we realize the telecom revolution has really transcended the last mile. Therefore, if we look upon skill development and employability also as a large-scale inclusionary mission, we have got to reach those on the other side of the last mile in large numbers.

When is a person on the other side of the last mile? When the person needs skills to become employable, but does not have easy access to the right intervention.

This may happen for one of two reasons. Either the skill intervention is not financially affordable, or it is not easily physically accessible. For example, for the urban poor, the primary constraint may be financial affordability, even though physical access to a skill development centre may not be a problem. For the rural poor, both financial affordability and physical accessibility may be problematic.

It therefore follows that to successfully transcend the last mile, we, the skill development community, must squarely address the question of financial affordability as well as physical accessibility.

Historically, financial affordability has been attempted through free or low cost programs, delivered by for-profit and non-profit entities, subsidized by generous helpings of government funding. On paper, it seems to work because a lot of people may appear to be getting 'trained'. In reality, the quality, accountability, and effectiveness of such models in terms of employment outcomes is questionable.

The NSDC model is different because it encourages for-profit, self-sustaining business models and pins its hope on the creativity of private entrepreneurs. It appears that the government wants to participate in this sector as an indirect investor, rather than a direct customer.

In this new world, skill development programs must be priced properly (sans subsidies) and first time job seekers must find ways to afford them. Enter lenders such as banks, non-banking financial institutions, and micro-finance companies. They must learn to lend to first time job seekers (with no credit history) on benign terms, and allow them (or their future employers) to repay once they start working.

On the other hand, the challenge with physical access is that the masses cannot be expected to move to where skill development centres are (usually metros). Rather, skill development interventions must move closer to the masses. This means centres must be in rural or upcountry locations. Since it is not easy to attract competent instructors to such settings, these centres must be connected to their urban counterparts in ways such that remote or distance learning can take place. This is a non-trivial problem that will require extreme innovation in areas such as pedagogy, remote learning, virtual classrooms, train-the-trainer, and mobile learning. We haven't even begun to scratch the surface but suffice to say that without such breakthroughs, the last mile will remain a pipe dream.

The day our un-subsidized skill development programs are financially affordable and physically accessible to first time job seekers on a very large scale, we, the skill development community, would have quietly arrived on the other side of the last mile. That journey would be well worth it.



Santanu Paul
CEO & Managing Director,
TalentSprint

HIGHLIGHTS

As on 30th April 2011



Training Projects Approved

26

Sector Skill Councils Approved

3

Districts Covered

161

of Centers

744

Number of Sectors Touched

20

People to be Trained in 10 Years

41 Million



ORDINARY TO EXTRAORDINARY

Prem Singh, 21, was one of four children born in a disadvantaged rural family in Dehradun and forced to drop out of school after Standard XI owing to his farm worker father's inability to fund his education any longer.

Prem had heard about B-ABLE from a friend and excited at the prospect of pursuing a skill development course that would set him on a proper career path despite lacking a formal academic qualification.

After attending a demo class at B-ABLE and coming to the conclusion that it was mid-way between a school and an ITI, Prem joined the automotive repair course at B-ABLE on August 8, 2010.

Prem underwent four months of practical and classroom training at the unique employer assisted center of B-ABLE in the premises of Commercial Motors, Dehradun. Subsequently, he apprenticed at Commercial Motors for two months of thorough on-the-job-training.

Owing to his diligence, Prem was offered a full-time job at Commercial Motors, Rishikesh, as a Trainee Automobile Mechanic, a position normally offered to ITI graduates. Prem received a remuneration of Rs 4,000 per month during the training period, in addition to accommodation and other facilities.

After garnering more experience in automobile industry, Prem wants to start his own workshop.

"I think I am well on the path to achieve my dreams. I will definitely open my own shop after 4-5 years when I consider myself an expert in automobile repairing," Prem says. Prem and others like him are excellent examples of how NSDC Partners are encouraging rural youth to dream big and spawning a new breed of potential entrepreneurs.

SOWING THE SEEDS OF SUCCESS

Basix Academy For Building Lifelong Employability (B-ABLE)

BASIX Academy for Building Lifelong Employability Ltd (B-ABLE), an initiative for those whose schools could not complete their education, works towards enhancing the ability of the under-educated and the under-skilled to become self-employed, find meaningful work and continually upgrade their competencies by offering them technical, commercial and life skills.

B-ABLE is a subsidiary of BASIX Limited (www.basixindia.com), the pioneering organization in microfinance and livelihood promotion.

B-ABLE has conceived an innovative, sustainable, nation-wide model for building a high quality skilled workforce - both in the unorganized and the organized sectors. It provides market-driven, aspiration-based vocational education and training using technology and partnerships.

It achieves this by using the experience of BASIX as a pioneering innovation driven livelihood promotion organization, its mobilization capability and relationships in 40,200 villages in 21 states through its manpower base of 10,100 people.

B-ABLE launched its initiative in 2009 with a model skill training campus at Dehradun. Currently, more than 1000 students have completed or are undergoing training in about 20 courses in 25 centers located in the states of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim, Maharashtra, Delhi and Meghalaya. In addition, pilot projects are underway in Punjab, Gujarat and Manipur.

B-ABLE has a vision of setting up 400 centers nationwide and skilling 10 lakh youth in 10 years. This year, B-ABLE plans to set up 100 centers with a manpower base of more than 800, extending its reach to 19 states and train about 8000 youth in more than 30 courses.

B-ABLE is targeting the following labor intensive sectors for building skills: Rural Farm & non-farm sector, Automobile, Hospitality & Tourism, Construction, Food Processing, Healthcare, and Banking, Insurance & Finance.



OUR PARTNERS



Done Deal: (From left) JobSkills CEO Mahesh Muzumdar, JobCorp co-founder Lathika Pai, NSDC CEO & MD Dilip Chenoy, JobCorp co-founder Ravina Raj Kohli and JobCorp Director Romi Malhotra after the signing of the agreement between JobSkills and NSDC. A subsidiary of JobCorp, JobSkills will train 1.7 million youth in 10 years.

SECTOR SKILL COUNCILS

A large number of industry sectors have been showing interest in creating Sector Skill Councils to manage the quality of their workforce. The concept of creating a body within the industry, which can set standards for various job roles, and then certify trainers and trainees against those standards, is rapidly gaining momentum. NASSCOM has submitted a proposal for creating a Skill Council for the IT/ITeS sector. Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) is leading a consortium to create the Skill Council for Media, gaming, animation and the films arena. Retailers Association of India has proposed to set up the Skill Council for Retail industry.

WORLD SKILLS COMPETITION

NSDC has joined hands with NASSCOM, CII, FICCI, SIAM, GJEPC and YLG Salon & Spa for the nationwide search for skilled and talented youth who will get the opportunity to represent the country at WorldSkills London 2011. One talented individual will be selected under each of the following 16 disciplines: Car painting, Plumbing and heating, Wall and floor tiling, Mould making, Electronics, CNC turning, Mechatronics, Polymechanics/automation, Web design, IT software solutions, Fashion technology, Jewellery design, Cooking, Confectionery, Beauty therapy and Hair styling. The selections have already started and would be completed by the middle of June. The chosen candidates would then undergo intensive coaching under experts drawn from the particular field so that they are in peak readiness at the time of the competition.



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