

Tanjan trains Nepalese students in building quake resistant structures

SE Report

GANGTOK, August 13: Tanjan Associate LLP, a company specialising in Ferrocement Prefabricated Rehabilitation Technology has trained 12 students from quake stricken Dofcha region of Nepal in building quake resistant & permanent

ferrocement structures in the country.

The first batch of 12 students attended the two-week-long concentrated training at the Tanjan Livelihood Skill Training & Research Centre near Dehradun. They were trained not only to reconstruct houses but also

water tanks, check dams, retaining walls, drainage systems, schools, public stations and community buildings, according to a statement from the company.

The company would station its experts in Nepal to monitor the process and set up small production

units across the region to service the needs of each small geographical area without the need for major outside intervention.

Tanjan has tied up with Nepal's First Power System Pvt Ltd for the project. It is also a knowledge partner of the State Institute of Capacity Building, Varanasi.

Congress behaved as it did

Skill India: The invaluable role of Sector Skill Councils

SUMIT KUMAR
AGARWAL

It has been some time since India has embarked upon a mostly unseen and unspoken mission of developing Sector Skills Councils on the lines of developed nations. It is an initiative that will eventually drive the entire workforce development eco-system in line with the needs of employers and do away with multiple points of skill development. Although in its nascent stage in India, we do have the blueprint of successful sector skill councils on many friendly countries such as the UK, Australia and Canada among others. So what is this sector skill council?

To answer that question better, we need to go back to the decade starting with the millennium. Although there were over six thousand polytechnics, ITIs and other workforce training institutions across India, it was a rare occasion when any of the alumni would get direct recruitment into the job roles they were trained for. Organizations and Industry were incurring huge costs in trying to first un-train and then re-train the available workforce to make them capable with even entry-level jobs. While on the one hand we were rapidly becoming one of the world's youngest countries on the other we were majorly deficient in developing a capable workforce. The demographic

dividend was being lost at a rapid rate and industry was threatening to relocate to affordable and capable overseas locations.

It was the urgent need of the hour to find a quick solution to the skill development issues facing the nation. In 2009 a National Skill Policy came into effect with the provision for forming sector skill councils that were Employer group led and would create specific training curricula and evaluation systems that would be acceptable across the gamut of each Industry's own employment requirements. Each particular job role would be defined by the Industry led group itself and be recorded as the 'National Occupational Standards (NOS)' for that Industry. The skill-training institute would then build curriculum and content around these standards and train according to Industry developed 'Qualification Packs (QPs)'. In simple terms it is something like highly specialized CBSE boards of the vocational space.

However, it wasn't as easy as that. For one, the government has always thought of itself as the regulator and provider of education and training, specially in the area of workforce development and secondly, even if there was a new industry led standard available where were the trainers and the equipment

with the existing polytechnics and ITIs. The biggest roadblocks were the fact that there already existed a Department of Employment & Training (DGET) under the labor ministry, whose almost entire existence was based on what the sector skill councils were proposing to now do. While some senior bureaucrats were vehemently opposed to it, most others were exceptionally cordial in accepting this new age policy shift and willing to align their own substantial knowledge and capabilities to take the country forward.

The National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) was formed in 2009 and given the task to both create sector skill councils and facilitate new skill development training providers through attractive gap funding and global knowledge backup. NSDC quickly started by identifying 42 different sectors within Industry, Agriculture and the Service sectors. It also put together a dedicated and highly energized team to take this initiative forward sometime in 2010-11. There was obviously a humongous amount of learning and obstructions to be faced because India had never seen anything like this before. Industry associations like FICCI, CII, ASSOCHAM, PHDCCI etc. were requested to lead these skill councils as they were the best suited to bring together stalwarts from

each section of the employer spectrum and also have free access to available knowledge. Ten-year roadmaps were created for each of the 42 sectors and as of 2015 nearly 37 of them are either running or in some stage of startup including one for 'Sports, Physical Education and Leisure'. This has definitely been a tremendous achievement towards regulating skill training. We still have some important roadblocks to clear as the likes of DGET, and the AICTE and the rest of the seventeen other government departments and ministries that impart skill training are reluctant to give up control over their domains and reluctant to being led by industry driven initiatives. We are hopeful that eventually they will realize the consolidated value of leaving execution to the executives and concentrate on governance alone.

Coming back to the core discussion about a sector skill council and its primary objectives, it is important to understand that a sector skill council is an autonomous non-profit organization that is driven by a governing council led by a lead partner (preferably the relevant and appropriate industry chamber), chaired by an Industry leader and supported by industry representatives, NSDC, content developers, training providers, assessors, trade union representatives, and the government. It is

funded by the NSDC with an understanding that it will achieve financial sustainability in a 5-7 year time period. Any group or consortium of interested employers can propose the setting up of a sector skill council to NSDC within a particular sector as long as they can substantiate a reasonable size of employment opportunities (existing or projected) within that sector countrywide over the next ten year period.

The national skill policy clearly states the role of the Sector Skill Councils to cover the following specific areas:

- Setting up LMIS (Labor Market Information Systems) to assist planning and delivery of training within their particular sector.
- Identification of skill development needs and preparing a catalogue of skill types to provide a roadmap for developing National Occupational Standards and Qualification Packs specific to that sector.
- Develop a sector specific skill development plan along with skill training providers and maintain skill inventory
- Standardize and participate in affiliation and accreditation processes for training providers
- Plan and execute training of trainers and encourage sustained up gradation of training facilities across the country
- Promotion of academies of

excellence

It is expected, and now increasingly believed, that a Sector Skill Councils will thus be able to achieve its primary objectives of reducing skills gaps and shortages, improving productivity, boosting the skills and optimising learning supply of their sector specific workforce on a continuous basis through skill development, re-skilling, career guidance and projected need mapping from the employer base.

Sector Skill Councils are the single most powerful engine within the entire skill development space that will define where India will stand over the next ten years in its dream for becoming global workforce leaders among other things.

It is a win-win for all and every citizen as well as the state governments must take cognizance of these progressive phenomena that is poised to change the face of young India forever.

(Sumit Kumar Agarwal is a Social Entrepreneur, Policy Analyst, skill Knowledge Provider, and a Trainer in mass delivery methodologies of Skill Development. He is the Founder of 'Livelihood Skill Training & Research (LSTR) Centre', a model sustainable skilling hub of International repute near Dehradun. He has also been one of the first group of knowledge providers to SICB-Sikkim)

Skill India: The Ubiquitous Employability Barrier

SUMIT KUMAR
AGARWAL

The two greatest concerns of employers today are finding good workers and retaining them. The difference between the skills needed on the job and those possessed by applicants, sometimes called the skill-gap, is of real concern to human resource managers and business owners looking to hire competent employees. It is often a huge cost to an employer to cover the distance between employing a merely suitable person to finally making him/her actually productive enough through internal skill training. The lack of employability skills among new employees is emerging as the largest cost to companies.

Employability skills are those basic skills necessary for getting,

keeping, and doing well on a job. Unlike occupational or technical skills, employability skills are generic in nature and cut across all industry types, business sizes, and job levels. Employability skills are generally divided into three skill sets:

Basic academic skills - which emphasize on Reading, Writing and Oral Communication.

Higher-order thinking skills - which emphasize on Learning, Reasoning, Decisions Making and Problem Solving.

Personal skills - which can span over many skills including Self Confidence, Social Skills, Team Skills, Communication skills, Leadership skills and grooming skills.

A typical Lifeskills matrix will look something like the following diagram where we can pick and

match the most suitable life skills to the technical skills that we provide. For example a carpenter/plumber shall be better equipped to handle his/her contractual agreement with an introduction to accounting skills and service skills, whereas a taxi operator will certainly gain from learning Interpersonal skills and safety & process skills.

EMPLOYABILITY & ENTERPRISE SKILLS

LIFE SKILLS LANGUAGE SKILLS ENTERPRISE SKILLS

More than 90 per cent of India's 457 million-strong work-force is in the unorganized sector, and they survive under pathetic conditions of work and life. From the 1980s, even while incomes have been

rising in India, generation of employment has slowed down to a trickle, particularly to the less-skilled and less-educated. Hence, despite the advantage of a huge and growing young population, India as a country has not been able to fully capitalize on this. It has so far been a case of "lost opportunity" for the country. Failure to equip young people with the job readiness skills critical to job success is equivalent to placing employability barriers in their path. Allowing students to graduate with these deficiencies has far reaching implications for the individual as well as society as a whole.

Although India is rapidly finding solutions to many Skill Development Challenges, including a huge supply-demand gap

both in terms of quality and quantity, which the current vocational education and training infrastructure is not geared enough to meet, the fact that vocational training is handled by multiple ministries (17 ministries at last count) without the required level of co-ordination between themselves actually worsens the condition. To overcome this situation a separate ministry for skill development has been initiated at the central government level and states have been encouraged to align with this ministry as quickly as possible.

India as a country enjoys a huge "demographic dividend" with an increasing proportion of working population between the age group of 15-59 years. Estimates show that in 2020, an average person will

only be 29 years old in India, compared to 37 years in China, 45 years in Western Europe, and 48 years in Japan. Therefore, it is argued that India possesses the potential to benefit from the 'demographic dividend' many long years into the future.

India has approximately 350 million people under age 19 and a relatively high fertility rate of 3.1. This is one area where India has a distinct advantage over China, whose one child policy resulted in a decline in fertility rate (at 1.7) and a rapid ageing of population.

It is becoming increasingly apparent to the world now that as a nation, we can well manage these issues related with skill development and employability through appropriate programs and implementation. The National Skill Development

Corporation (NSDC) has done exemplary work to turn this "lost opportunity" into a "golden opportunity" and India as a country is on its way to become the largest provider of skilled work-force globally in tune with world-wide quality standards and also one of the most developed economies of the world. However, it is of equal import that:

- 92% of the work-force of India which belongs to the Unorganized Sector is more or less excluded from the current vocational training set-up.

- By 2018, it is estimated that India will have around 57 million school-dropouts or illiterates and hence this segment needs special focus.

- Huge demand-supply skill gap, 90 percent of the

jobs in India are "skill based"; entailing the requirement of vocational training. It is estimated that only 6% of the youth in India are vocationally trained.

In conclusion it may be prudent to remember that Skill Development is a long-term high investment social activity and must be viewed in terms of incremental success rates while making it a socially participative venture for all citizens.

(Sumit Kumar Agarwal is the Founder of 'Livelihood Skill Training & Research (LSTR) Centre', a model sustainable skilling hub of international repute near Dehradun. He has also been one of the first groups of knowledge providers to SICB-Sikkim. He can be reached at sumit@tanjun.asia)

Skill India: Rurban – The emerging new society

India is experiencing an unprecedented growth in urban infrastructure, which is surely visible to all of us. What may not be visible is the fact that the sheer size of land acquisition itself, is sucking in humungous amounts of rural communities and agricultural economies into these vast cities. Creating independent socio-economic sacs like suburbs, la-dora areas, notified sectors and villages within and around cities.

'Rurban', the new society is emerging rapidly and without warning. This society is neither urban nor rural, yet both. The point is to draw our collective attentions to the tangible and positive impact of such growth. These 'rurban' sacs, puddles, pockets, bubbles, areas or whatever we choose to call them are teeming with eligible, educated and aware youth who are rearing to go.

These youth are not urban rural dwellers, but affluent 'rurbanites' with substantial buying power. They are not rural anymore,



and they are unable to fit into the urban either. They are armed with some education but little else for meaningful or sustainable employment in the modern world. What they are now demanding is skills and employability training to become truly urbanized. They want to be locally employable, nationally valuable and globally acceptable. Can we really call the villages between say Gangtok and Namchi rural anymore? Can we expect the youth from these villages to have any different aspirations than their city brethren? Or more importantly can we get away by hoping to push them into doing underpaid, unskilled work with no

access to a lifelong career opportunity. We are only beginning to see the horrors of having a rural development ministry, an urban development ministry and no rurban focus. The world is changing and policy makers need to rapidly change their perspective towards demographic profiling.

Focus is therefore required on the concept of "Lifelong Employability". We believe that one-time technical training or imparting of skills is not enough and cannot cater to the skill related problems of a fast changing knowledge economy like that of India. To address this, we need a comprehensive range of skill-sets and processes that can ensure continued employability of the person in the ever changing macro-economic environment and can contribute to his overall growth.

There has been little opportunity or access city type education or training that could make the rurban youth skilled and acceptable in the numerous new jobs that are appearing in the

adjoining cities and industrial belts. This needs to be addressed immediately to keep youth away from unsocial activities.

In most part of India businessmen have been quick to see the rurban opportunity and colleges have started mushrooming along the National & State highways. Dreams are being recklessly retailed, and **India Inc. in ten years, has been brought to its knees by the simultaneous excess of qualified youth but a lack of capable workers.** Skill training, might we say, has been missing.

We may need to rapidly prepare our education system, skill training, SME products and development modules to access this population. This time around we might want to give them dignity enough to continue their rural vocations elsewhere with pride, or move into the urban market with their heads held high.

Besides the Primary Technical Skills, we could aim at delivering "soft skills" such as communication,

collaboration and team work. In addition, we could develop skills such as ability to create, apply, share and distribute knowledge, to work in teams that may be socially and psychologically heterogeneous, to have the capacity to re-skill and re-train as circumstances demand, to be able to participate in networks and develop the social capital that creates the learning and develops the resilience to cope with change; to cultivate a positive, opportunistic and entrepreneurial orientation to change; and to become committed to continuous and life-long learning far beyond the years of formal education, or first employment.

It seems there might be an urgent need to look at this rapidly growing population, which has a huge storehouse of semi-educated youth, reasonable start-up funds and growth aspirations just like any other urban dweller. This population is moving towards becoming the most powerful force to reckon with, not only within India, but on a global scale as India fulfills its dream of becoming the

skill capital of the world by 2022 and putting together 500 million skilled youth.

Powerful and innovative initiatives need to be introduced that fill the training gap with a KSA (Knowledge, Skills & Attitude) approach and a clear focus on developing the 3H: Hands, Head and Heart.

We can use our own huge rurban force, which has the practical knowledge of rural,

the futuristic exposure of urban and is suitably based close to the growth centers, to create a new class of workers who will proudly work towards vocations of national importance such as a stable manufacturing workforce, food security, development, initiatives, skill building, financial inclusion and sustainability through better design.

"The focus should be on producing a large number of skill trained employable youth who are locally employable, nationally demanded and globally prepared."

