



A students working on AC parts.

Fixing the skills gap

The Kherwadi Social Welfare Association provides vocational training to youth from slums and rural areas and trains them into a skilled workforce

Manufacturing industries have helped drive economic growth for over three centuries and continue to do so. Building a robust manufacturing sector is a necessary step in national development as it helps raise income levels, and provide the machinery, tools and materials to build modern infrastructure. India has leapfrogged into the global services trade with its information technology and business process outsourcing industries and continues to build up its manufacturing sector, aiming to raise the share of manufacturing in its economy from the current 16% to 25% by 2022.

Across nations, manufacturing is regarded as an essential and uniquely powerful engine of economic growth. In advanced economies, a strong manufacturing sector is celebrated for creating well paid employment and maintaining technical prowess. In developing economies, manufacturing is recognised as an engine of development, raising agrarian population out of poverty and turning poor nations into significant players in the global economy.

India boasts of a very large young population. With 50% of India's population under 25 and with an 80% plus school dropout rate, the vast majority of these unskilled youth and their families will end up living in slums. Vocational training for this largely ignored population is a practical, cost-effective way for youth to gain skills to become employable and earn a livelihood and thus

contribute to the national economy.

Considering that nearly 75% of the additional jobs will be skill based and require vocational training, it is imperative for India to move up the skill-ladder. This issue is compounded by the large number of youth (estimated to be more than 300 million plus) who have not completed school, and therefore in a sense been forgotten by the society.

As per industry research, till 2020 human resources will remain India's most significant global advantage. While the developed nations will be burdened with an ageing population, India will have one of the world's youngest populations, with more than half its people under 25. With this demographic dividend, India will be in a position to provide the rest of the world with a productive workforce. However, this demographic dividend could turn into a demographic disaster because of lack of employability of this work force due to absence of relevant skills.

Yuva Parivartan has today emerged as the largest livelihood organisation in the country, training more than 100,000 students every year. It focuses on a segment of society that is relatively ignored by the Government as well as the NGOs – less educated and deprived youth dropouts. Yuva Parivartan was established and works for the youth who do not complete school, and hence have little livelihood opportunities, thus ending up as casual la-

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bourers in urban or rural areas.

The NGO was started by Kishor and Mrinalini Kher, the President and Hon. Secretary and Trustee. By providing short-term employment oriented courses to such youth, the NGO enables them to become contributing members of the society.

With a bouquet of 20-25 courses and other 200 that are chosen according to the local needs, the courses are varied. The popular ones are Computers, Basic Wireman, Mobile Repairing, Hardware Mechanic, Motor Mechanic Arc Welding, etc.

Yuva Parivartan is today in a position to help the National Skills Development Mission on a national level. "Their current operations span 18 states in India - Maharashtra, Gujarat, Goa, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Delhi, Haryana, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Andhra Pradesh and Bihar."

In FY 13-14, they had skilled about 130,000 youth. Of these, approximately 60% are gainfully employed either through a wage or self-employment. They envision reaching one million youth by 2017.

Having created a scalable and replicable model, the NGO today is helping smaller and like-minded NGOs build capacities and replicate the model so as to achieve exponential growth.

Explaining the courses, Kishore says that they are designed to suit and fit in to the schedule of a dropout youth. "The training at the 'Livelihood Development Centre' (LDC) spreading over three months gives 160 hours of practical (70%) and theory (30%) for entry level jobs in industry related skills," averred he.

This model had its limitation in the rural areas while it worked well in urban and semi urban areas. So, Yuva Parivartan designed a model especially to suit youth in rural and tribal India. The curriculum was edited to suit the local level needs and introduces youth to 80 hours training over 10 days in *Talukas, Wadis* and *Padas* of rural India.

"These Mobile Livelihood Development Centres (MLDC) or camps are supervised by camp leaders and coordinators. They are the key people who along with the course teachers, social workers also assist students in getting job placement," emphasised Kishore.

Today, the NGO has well designed processes to register students and help place them through the placement department. Placement is planned by connecting with the local industry and business mainly in the un-organised sector. Over the years, Yuva Parivartan has worked closely with key industry partners like Blue Star for air-condition and refrigeration servicing, agencies of Maruti, Honda and several garages for mechanics for two and four wheeler, service companies like Eureka Forbes, as well as mobile phone manufacturers like Nokia, etc.

The NGO has benefitted considerably from the industry partnership to seek advice and guidance in designing the course curriculum upgrading and approval of manuals and handbooks which are approved by MES (Maharashtra Government) and Quality Council of India (QCI). They also have ISO 2001 -2008 certification for its systems and procedure.

In spite of the phenomenal growth that the NGO has seen in past four years to skill train youth from 18000 per annum in 2010 -2011 to 100,000 per annum in 2012-2013, Yuva Parivartan and all the skill training institutes, academics and NGO continue



Students working on engine motor mechanic.

to face the challenge of attracting youth to join the course and to get them to stay in a job.

"Their aspirations do not match their education and skills acquired. Boredom, fatigue and lack of staying power make them quit their jobs easily. "We have tried to overcome these through value based training to bring motivational and attitudinal change in the youth through 'Soch Ka Parivartan' (Change of mindset) a 12 module training. In addition, a few hours of financial literacy, work ethics and innovative explanation have started showing results gradually," expressed Kishore.

Today, severe shortages in the manufacturing and service industry has slowed down the growth. Trained skilled people are needed for fabrication, AC ducting and other manufacturing related fields but these skills are not attractive and aspirational. Better safety standards, better emoluments and working conditions could bring about a win-win situation for skill training institutes and the manufacturing industry. ■



Mrinalini Kher
Hon. Secretary and Trustee
Kherwadi Social Welfare Association