

STAR Forum
Skill Training for Advancement of Rural Societies
3rd and 4th Jan 2011

Venue

Mahratta Chamber of Commerce, Industries and Agriculture (MCCIA), Tilak Road , Pune

Report of the conference proceedings

<http://www.starrforum.blogspot.com/>

Proceedings of 3rd Jan 2011

SESSION : I Welcome and Background of the conference : Dr.Sudhir Prabhu

We all know that continued and sustainable growth of the Indian economy requires transformation of knowledge into skills and updating it through learning to be able to compete in the market. The present economy poses several challenges to the existing skill development programme of our country. In order to address these challenges and improve the relevance and quality of skill development, it is crucial that educational policy and planning must respond to the demands of the labour market. The workshop was organized to identify gaps and understand different models being successfully implemented by various organizations in India.

The conference started with a welcome note from **Dr. Sudhir Prabhu**, a leading medical practitioner from Jacksonville USA, in Asthma, Allergy and Immunology. His charitable efforts are observed through his work as Executive Vice President and on the board of Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation of USA. The workshop is his efforts in the direction to help identify educational programs suitable for remote rural villages of India to minimize illiteracy and promote economic development.

He stated that the objective of the initiative of STARS Forum (Skills Training Advancement in Rural Societies) was broadly two fold: To form a common platform for NGOs and individuals working in the area of knowledge-transfer of relevant marketable skills in rural & tribal populations as well as the urban poor across India, to form a "vocational/professional body" for mutual support, advocacy and to advance this field, and secondly to encourage dialog and facilitate evolution of innovative approaches to reach as many needy people as possible with

such training through innovative cost effective ways, considering that the populations which need to be reached are truly vast. (Detailed keynote presented in the previous blog)

SESSION : II

Existing Scenario and opportunities for Rural youth in vocational training, employment opportunities and entrepreneurship development

SPEAKER : Dr.Karunakaran

Dr. T Karunakaran, Director, MGIRI, In his opening remarks he said that the time has now come where it was not anymore just about the 'survival of the fittest' one had to excel or exit – and that was the theme for his presentation. Elaborating on his experience as Vice Chancellor of various Rural Universities he explained how to create a Tech. support system and a technology to enable tribal / SHG for rural resource based products and vocationalisation at 1st degree. He explained the need to of a university degree tuned to create “techno-managerial cadres “ for rural students. So far we only looked at land as a capital on which a person can build , however the time had come to shift the paradigm to Knowledge is the capital on which a person can grow. All vocational models have to move away from being city centric – the city is not the core. If we had to generate meaningful livelihood for the rural youth then we need to reduce the gap between technology and application of technology. He then went on to explain the Agri -indus concept with the core belief that villages have ethnic wealth, so why not provide value addition at the source. Yes, infrastructure, communication and scaling up of technology are requirements – what is also required is lab to land conversion of technology. Today vocationalisation is 'stigmatised'. There are innumerable cases where parents/children do not to follow their traditional craft/skill. He recommends models of vocationisation where agri based training can be made attractive – think beyond just cultivation, from automation to effective mechanisation, provide knowledge in both agriculture and entrepreneurship. Can we use the *varnashram* model/planning in vocationalisation? He stressed on providing first level value addition to skills/crafts.

While speaking about the current Govt. Initiatives he informed that - Much is being worked out ...But convergence was missing. The training efforts are scattered across too many departments / schemes/ programmes . May Be – MSME will have take the lead for convergence (Right now R.D is trying under a scheme TULIP)

He felt that attitudes toward vocational training required a change and pointed out key issues like - Vocational training is not a matter of choice but helplessness. Craftsman's Vs his child. How to bring in 'dignity of work'? We have to stop looking at villages as 'work-force' providers.

Touching upon how to bring dignity to work, he gave examples of Vigyan ashram & Lok Bharati of Gujarat etc who provide Work-oriented education, Vocational education as a parallel structure with lateral tunnel and upward mobility (as in Australia). “Professionalisation’ of rural trades (Rudhakrishnana committee 1949.)

He raised questions that organisations needed to answer – Is it Agriculture v/s industry - ITI / NSDC focused on industrial training. What about short diploma courses for agri? If the experience shows that entrepreneurial success is low. . What to do? Should one trust Industry? Agri? or Small enterprises ? The success will depend on pushing agri-value addition into micro-sector energizing with higher level small / medium enterprises. He said, that already the Industries, Business, Service division is well understood. However visualizing Services is very elusive. His suggestion: Think in terms of MDS: Millennium Dev. Goals, incorporating Education, Health, Environment, livelihood, etc.

He concluded with the need to visualise the service sector needs of rural India, and briefly touched upon creating Rural Economic Zones - This economic zone will be a cluster of rural panchayats. The cluster will comprise farmers, weavers, artisans, self-help groups and women. The economy of such regions would be built on local agricultural resources or local ethnic resources.

SPEAKER : Dr.Kiran Kulkarni, MCED

Dr. Karunakarn's note was followed by presentation by **Shri Kiran Kulkarni**, Executive Dir. Maharashtra Centre for Entrepreneurship Development. He lucidly explained the model followed by MCED towards development of entrepreneurs. MCED was formed with a vision of 'Engendering the spirit of entrepreneurship globally'. He stated that trainers have to understand that entrepreneurship skills are different from soft skills. The 4 primary entrepreneur skills he stated were – risk taking, innovation, organization and profit motivation. Just technical training is not sufficient to make enterprises. Soft Skills and entrepreneur skills are equally important. MCED believes that this entrepreneur skill training should be given to all, and those with inherent capabilities will move ahead to become entrepreneurs.

He further added that the courses should follow the DGET as they are standardized and uniform in content. The Add-on training is to be given through MCED. MCED has developed a common pool of resource personnel for training purposes through an empanelment process. They expound the authorization model for providing training rather than franchising, as this ensures quality of training. Lastly he expressed his personnel opinion that audio-visual media is the most effective medium, and how the training films produced by them have benefitted students. These films are available on the internet via youtube.com. And he expressed the need to cover many topics through films.

Government Initiatives

Principal Rajendra Ghume followed with a thorough summary of courses conducted by ITI, Aundh, Pune. He gave a detailed overview of the courses and their impact and how they have tried to accommodate more students.

SESSION III : Efforts and issues in skill /employment training for the marginalised and efforts taken by various organisations

i) Shri Kiran Inamdar , Suzlon Foundation

Shri Kiran Inamdar, representing Suzlon Foundation concisely put forth pointers for quality of technical training required for rural youth. He said the technical training should achieve following objectives:

- Encourage entrepreneurship
- Give added value
- Cost beneficial
- Create quality products and services
- Instill confidence
- Optimum utilization of available resources
- Inclusive
- Changes / updates with time

He expressed that if in a village we can create one technician, and give multi skill training a village can become self sufficient. He explained it with the case where in a village that was producing peanuts, instead of just selling, the villagers were taught to produce chikki, i.e. create a product. Further they were also trained to make peanut butter (value added product) that could then be sold in urban markets.

ii) Smt Sunanda Patwardhan

Post Shri Inamdar's session we had two presentations by organization managing SHG's and the issues faced by women were discussed. Pragati Pratishthan lead by **Smt Sunanada Patwardhan** has been doing commendable work in the tribal areas of Jawahar, Mokhada of Thane district of Maharashtra. The NGO has been working relentlessly to provide education, health, safe drinking water, electricity, self employment opportunities, technical training, and development of agri-based activities.

iii) Dr.Kshama Mhetre,

Dr.Mhetre of CORD Training Centre, Sidhbari, Himachal Pradesh. The organization follows two approaches, **self participatory** component driven and addressed by the people themselves and the other approach was to **provide services** where professional help was required by the people.

The self participatory component included economic self-reliance, people's local self governance, environment issues, social justice and gender, preventive and promotive health and community based rehabilitation for disability, inner self unfolding.

She went on to explain how they defined 'self/active participation' as against passive.

Active

- Individuals and groups become *Independent*
- *Process* oriented
- *Beneficiaries influence*-programme
- Increases people's *ownership*

Passive

- dependent
- target oriented
- not so
- not so

- | | |
|---|---|
| – <i>Sustainable programmes</i> | fizzles away |
| – Programme becomes <i>Integrated</i> as issues of poor are multiple and programme is people driven | remains isolated as it is top-down driven |
| – <i>Success</i> is inevitable as programmes are relevant and realistic to the people | not so |
| – People become effective <i>change agents</i> | not so |

iv) Dr.Sandeep Deshmukh, Hemendra Kothari Foundation

Dr Sandeep Deshmukh, Representing Hemendra Kothari Foundation a funding agency, then explained what do agencies like theirs expect from NGO's. HKF positions itself to play a catalyst role and to assist/part-fund efficacious projects/institutions in areas of education, healthcare, environment, sports, arts and culture.

HKF's Intervention in Vocational Training included the assessment of scope & need. They are creating Vocational Training opportunities to 'out-of-school' youth by providing them skills like: Automobile repairs, electrical motor repair; driving; hospitality; computer education; fabrication & welding; electrical/electricians.

HKF envisages a scaling up in their coverage of rural-youth for vocational skills development. They want to strengthen the basic educational infrastructure of schools in remote villages. And want to provide enriching learning process to rural youth through varied qualitative education models.

Currently they have identified the following concerns and working to overcome or provide solutions for the same

- Poor Outreach of ITIs and ITCs
- Thin Population of Competent NGOs in Remote Areas
- High Costs of Existing Mechanisms
- Limited Scale of Training
- Poor Employability
- Lack of Entrepreneurship
- Weak Link between Employers and Apprentices

v) Shri.Rajendra Naik, SEWA Rural

Shri.Rajendra Naik of SEWA Rural described efforts made by SEWA in training rural youth. Early in 80s SEWA RURAL (SR) observed that while on one hand there was wide spread unemployment and under employment in tribal areas of Bharuch & Narmada districts, on the other hand the industrial development that was taking place in locations like Ankleshwar, Panoli and Bharuch offered considerable scope for employment. It therefore decided to set up a vocational Training Centre. As a result, Vivekananda Gramin Tekniki Kendra (VGTK) was formally launched in 1986.

The main objectives of the NGO are-

1. Selection of students from poorest of poor among the rural families. Some education in the school is essential but no minimum level or passing criteria. Only those who would not get any opportunity for formal vocational training are selected.

2. Course duration is of two years. First year at VGTK campus for residential training and second year as a full time trainee in the industries.
3. Cultivation of good habits like time keeping, regularity, hard work, study, prayers etc. and character building measures which are given preference in the industries.
4. Maximum encouragement given to the students for community activities such as sports, group discussions, organizing of various functions so that leadership qualities, team work and managing of a group are cultivated.
5. The vocational trades selected are those who have ready employment potential in the Industries nearby. The curriculum in each of these is also tailor made for their employability potential and/or for setting of own unit.
6. Maximum emphasis on practical training to ensure that every student becomes a skilled worker at the end of one year.
7. Continuous rapport and coordination with Industries for industrial training, placement for training and subsequently in jobs.
8. Continuous counselling of students post placement for reducing the drop outs from their jobs. To ensure their smooth transition into the industrial life, full support and guidance is provided during the second year when the students are taking full time training in the industries
9. Ongoing changes in various components of training due to fluctuations in industrial scenario, market trends, overall economic situation of country etc.
10. Establishment of excellent rapport with industries, government, local community.

SESSION IV : Initiatives taken up by the banking Sector

The banking sector was then represented by **Shri Rajiv Kadam**, Jt. Director M-SETI (Mahabank Self employment training Institute), an Institute run by Bank of Maharashtra trust MARDEF.

At present, all the training courses conducted at M-SETI are offered "Free of cost" and hostel facilities are also offered "Free of cost". A refundable deposit is collected on first day and it is refunded on completion of the course successfully. All courses are residential in nature. Students are admitted through a selection process, test and interview. Group Discussions and debates are conducted at hostel in the evening hours, and there are no Holidays. Regular reviews are conducted. During the course they also interact with successful entrepreneurs of previous batches, make market visits and get on-job training. Lastly the institute supports them by providing them guidance and hand-holding during loan proposals, and it also keeps track of the progress of student for the next two years, providing assistance where needed.

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SESSION I : Private and NGO Initiatives in skill & vocational training Opportunities and challenges

i) Mr.Sunil Bhondge, Managing Director , i-active

On day 2 of the conference a very inspiring presentation was made by **Shri Sunil Bhondge** of I Active. It showed how quality course content and delivery system could enhance the attitude towards vocational training and give standardized course delivery – where trainers are an issue. He presented an e-learning based teaching approach, where the course content can be learned through content delivered via a CD on the computer. This eliminated the need for a highly trained trainer, gives flexibility to student to finish his course and provided lab facilities to conduct practical training. The scalability and portability potential is very high with the franchisee based approach of setting up Active training centers. For details – see attached ppt.

ii) Shri Kaustubh Devale, Lend-a-hand-India

Shri Kaustubh Devale of Lend A Hand, India (LAHI) then made a presentation explaining their scope and approach to providing vocational training. They stated that their approach to development as follows:

- Identify successfully demonstrated models of development interventions and technologies
- Partner in diversification, wider replication and scaling up
- Use of existing infrastructure
- Working within system with government as an active partner

The stated core areas of concern according to them were:

- How do we provide a “Bundle of Skills”
- What is the Content & Form of delivery
- What Mechanisms for skills advancement are going to be used
- How do we creating demand from intended end users
- Check the viability from resources point of view
- Does it require engagement with government and how do we go for it
- Can the courses be mainstreamed
- How can we use existing assets

LAHI believes that there is a need for a paradigm shift in thinking about vocational education and should focus on the ‘Learning by doing principle’. It is also important to develop a scientific spirit toward learning. And though there were many limitations in operating in rural areas, the need of the hour demands that we provide adequate meaningful learning opportunities in villages.

They presented a case study of their plan100 program with Vigyan Ashram, Pabal (VA). The work entails the following:

- VA-LAHI will work in partnership and introduce skill training at high school (8th to 10th)
- 72+ schools will be covered in Maharashtra, Karnataka & Goa
- There will be a dedicated full-time trained personnel to conduct the courses.
- There will be a support team of Instructors, Field Officers, Trainers and Project Managers to ensure the operational functions of conducting the courses.
- Data management systems will be deployed to track development
- Engagement with government for certifications and recognition.

They have already achieved success at with their model

- The courses are integrated in school syllabus
- Nearly 10,000 students “taught”
- Dignity of labor & overcoming of gender role stereotyping
- Learning by doing & connection with school curriculum
- Connection of school to village
- Creation of demand at village (society) level
- Employment generation
- Government engagement
 - School timetable refinement
 - Reservation of seats in ITI, GPT & Bi-vocal course
 - In principle acceptance of model

The challenges that they faced for successful replication/scalability were-

- Generating content for skills development
- Attrition amongst instructors
- Sustainability at school level
- Not able to cater to out of school youth
- Instill interest & ownership by rural community

The major obstacles for scale up were:

- Financial viability (2 Crore by LAHI over 5 years for 60 schools)
- Adoption by other organizations
- Mainstreaming
- Maintaining quality and consistent delivery

iii) Mr.Dilip Tikle , Connectdots

Mr.Dilip Tikle of Connectdots gave an inspirational talk on following points

There are different models of Vocational education are available.

- IBT is a supplementary to tradition education. ITI is another model , emerging i-Active is a blended delivery model which helps to provide education to large number of facilitators
- Content creation is expensive and it needs to be upgraded after every 3yrs.

- The main challenges in front of companies like i-Active is to make the product (content) in time and reach to the market within time. They also have a challenge of developing content in local languages and take it to the last person in short time.
- To solve above problems we need blended model which will have combination of ground reality, best technologies and understanding of subject matter needs.
- You can't have a typical course developed and make similar model for some other course.
- Some traditional systems can't produce world class people there because the faculty doesn't know what's going on in the world outside.
- Some companies are good in creating content, framework whereas some in support system, such companies should work together.
- World's largest content manufacturing is happening in India. It's one of the biggest business opportunities.
- We should look what is going on outside and should not waste time in starting from zero, doing research on everything. There are some world class vocational training universities which has made their content open source but we need to get information about it.

A short but very interesting observation was made by **Shri Sachin Kulkarni**, of a leading construction house in Pune. With the increasing focus on development of infrastructure projects across the nation, there was a need for skill man power for the construction industry. Large corporate like L&T were already providing training to labour for use of mechanized methods. The need of the hour was to generate trained and skilled labour for the construction segments. The numbers were high and the large construction houses were interested in investing in providing training opportunities. It did provide a win-win situation.

iv) Shri Bharat Bhatt, GANATAR

Shri Bharat Bhatt then made a very animated and presentation about the work done by their organization Ganatar. GANATAR is a collective effort to concretize new scenario of alternative education system. Ganatar has chosen the niche of children of migrating workers especially the salt pan labourers. The work is seasonal and parents are away from their villages from November to June. Thus many children miss out on formal education as they are never able to complete a full term. There was no system that took their unique condition and mainstreaming them was a major concern. In such circumstances, they are deprived of their basic right for education and forced to support their families with work. Nearly 25% of total school drop-outs are children from such migrating families. GANATAR is active with the children of these migrating labourers, experimenting in the field of education. The objective being that since children cannot have regular education while working seasonally on the salt pans of Kutch in the most inhospitable environment; they decided to take the school to the children. Their model is highly portable and has helped the student get into mainstream education system. Their model of seasonal supplementary schooling near the workplace is now slowly showing results. They

have also recently taken up the project of providing seasonal hostel facilities. The principle dictum that Ganatar believes in, is that experiential knowledge will lead to internalization of the training. This will lead to proper application of knowledge gained, will give them more adaptability and create innovators. (Add Video clip)

v) Shri Anant Abhang (MITRA)

The last presentation was made by **Shri Anant Abhang** where he propounded the philosophy creating agri-entrepreneurs - not very far from Dr. T KARunakarn's Agri-indus concept. The main concerns/questions answered were –

Is Agri- Entrepreneurship development an important solution to Agricultural problems ?

1. Does it prepare a farmer to face uncertainties ?
2. Impact of Liberalization , Privatization , Globalization
3. Is the Government role limited to providing
 - a)Subsidies
 - b) Government schemes
4. What is required to be done to enhance the education level of farmers
5. Is entrepreneurship being thrust upon him
6. Can we envisage or bring about an attitudinal change. Can farming shift from means of livelihood to a business?

He stressed on the need to train farmers in methods of pre-processing and value addition to products.

vi) Dr.Sudha Kothari, Chaitanya

The 2 days of the workshop was summed up by **Smt Sudha Kothari** of Chaitnya from Rajurnagar, Dist.Pune,Maharashtra, and the floor was open for discussion and question answer sessions to each of the participating organization. One important conclusion was that NGO can only work successfully to a point. And it did require government intervention to scale up to a national level or even state-wide level. The downside of government intervention was the dilution of the concept. The last day saw a lot more sharing of resources by the organization representatives and a willingness to adapt some key success elements from each one's efforts. Ideas and possibilities and technologies were shared and an openness to experiment with other's models was discussed. To this end the objectives of the conference were duly met.

vii) Dr. Yogesh Kulkarni,

Executive Director of Vigyan Ashram,Pabal,Dist.Pune, said that every one is talking about meeting needs of the industry. But the focus should be on meeting needs of the nation! Many people complained about not getting adequate skilled people in the cities. The problem is not of an adequate manpower but real problem of those people is of not getting skilled manpower at low cost!

An ITI trained person needs to works for 8 hrs on machine or in workshop. Still he gets less than Rs.5000/- pm. While polytechnic passed person easily get Rs.15000/- pm without much of physical labour and degree holder even get better payment without engaging in much physical labour. In such case, who will aspire to become an ITI holder. As told by Dr.Karunakaran , today's choice of skilled

profession is by helplessness and not by choice. Person who goes to ITI knows that he came there because it is (financially or merit-wise) not possible for him to go for polytechnic or degree course. It is necessary to have vertical and horizontal mobility. Govt is talking about the National vocational qualification framework and we may see situation changing in future.

Dr.Kulkarni mentioned that skilled training should not be targeted to meet demands of the cities. Instead for rural vocational training efforts should focus on livelihood generation at local level. Today everyone is talking of urbanization and it is projected as inevitable. But what kind of life style the new migrated community will get in the cities? Intellectuals try to convince you that agriculture is not viable with small landholding. It is well known that how the Govt policies, leads to exploitation of farmers and manipulation of farm prices. In such cases on one side, we are making agriculture unviable and forcing farmers to migrate to a place where their quality of life will be worse.

A market force tries its best to question Gandhiji's ideas on rural development in today's context. But where are their other alternatives?

It is necessary that Voluntary organization working in skill training areas should think about creating livelihood opportunity around sustainable rural development. Training for the industrial workforce cannot become the mission of VOs. STARS forum should become a platform for Voluntary organization to raise our voice collectively.

Concluding Session :

“Taking The School to the Students Model”

Dr. Sudhir Prabhu presented a “Taking The School to the Students Model” that would be village –centric, where the trainer is from the village/taluka itself and is not capital intensive, i.e. training in skills and services which are less dependent on brick & mortar structures and appropriate for the geographical area, its needs and the changing economic/market dynamic.

The model he described would have a wheel and spokes structure, where the “nerve centre” will be at the District level. Here the curriculum & leveraging of appropriate technology will be evolved and the “master trainer” will train the trainers. The centre will serve as a resource to the trainers in the field and be responsible to scout and select the cluster of villages for placement of the trainer. The centre will be responsible to keep updated with the Govt. programmes as well as for funding and self-sustainability. The training would need to have three distinct aspects : Technical Skills Training +Soft Skills/personality development+ Entrepreneurial skills. Further, training would not be complete unless it also includes “post skills component” consisting of training of pricing, storage, transportation, marketing etc., as applicable.

The trainer will be assigned to a taluka and assigned four to five village clusters, with each cluster having 3 to 5 villages. Preferably the taluka/village clusters will already have stable SHG(s).The trainer will have one training class per cluster per week, teaching one “primary skill” and at least one “secondary skill” to each student. After a defined period (8 to 16 weeks) the trainer will move on to the next assigned village-clusters. In all likelihood a taluka would be covered in two years by a single trainer.

Dr. Prabhu then went on with summary presentation. He expressed the hope that this two day meeting would not turn out to be a onetime initiative but a stepping stone for further collaborative effort. He proposed the following organizational Mission, Goals and Objectives of the STARS Forum after review of the presentations and input from the attendees:

MISSION

Serve as a collaborative body for mutual support of those engaged in vocational skills training, facilitate advance in this field and promote innovative approaches to reach larger needy populations.

GOALS

1. Serve as a resource for mutual benefit of individuals and NGOs working in the field of vocational knowledge transfer.
2. Provide a platform for dialog, share ideas, outcomes and best practices.
3. Facilitate networking.
4. Promote connectivity to relevant information.
5. Encourage younger workers.
6. Advocacy - With curriculum, minimum standards, certification, accreditation of training programs.
- With the Government as necessary
7. Facilitate advance in the field.

OBJECTIVES

1. Establish a Steering Committee to move STARS Forum forward.
2. Create a Web-Site or Blog to a) Facilitate discussion and exchange of ideas
b) Post videos/Youtube
c) Provide important links
d) Timely upload important information/Govt programmes & notices
e) Create a repository of relevant information.
3. Create and keep updated directory of organizations & individuals engaged in this field.
4. Publish e-newsletter
5. Advocacy to improve effectiveness and reach of the training programmes.
6. Organize annual meeting.

Steering Committee was selected as follows : Dr.Yogesh Kulkarni,Vigyan Ashram, Pabal, Maharashtra (Coordinator), Shri.Ashok Bhagat,Vikas Bharati ,Jharkhand; Shri David D'Souza, Gramothan Foundation, Bangalore; Dr.T.Karunakaran, MGIRI,Wardha; Dr.Kshama Mhetre,CORD,Sidbari,H.P.; Dr.Sudhir Prabhu, social entrepreneur ,USA; Dr. Dilip Tikle,ConnectDots, Pune.