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poke me

GoI, get out of skilling and get the bureaucracy to create the ecosystem

Skill GoI Before Skill India



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ilding skills of private citizens using private players when their role should be in nurturing an ecosystem by acting as a 'system integrator'.

By GoI's own admission, the National Skill Development Corporation has failed to deliver on its objective of improving the formal skill training of the population from below 5% in 2009 to anything comparable to that of developed countries (53-92%) till 2013. The 18% unemployment rate among graduates and above in 2016 is an indicator that the ecosystem of delivering appropriate and quality skills to the jobs being created has not yet happened. Given India's track record of poor execution in education — and skilling — it is best to focus on improving one's skills at execution first before driving the skills of others.

Can I Read and Write?...

Take our primary and secondary education system. The latest Annual Status of Education Report (Aser) shows that only 58% of Class 5 students can read a Class 2 textbook. We are launching more IITs and IIMs. But what about quality educators? The technical training and teacher training institutes have been failures and need privatisation route to survive.

Certain Indian traits need to be kept in mind while driving the way forward. Our ability to execute long-term, result-oriented processes is very weak. Even India Inc has been struggling for years to drive R&D and innovation. The Skill India mission, in this context, needs a better governance system. The Balanced Execution Agenda, for instance, should address financial and non-financial, short- and long-term, tangible and intangible objectives in a systematic manner with linked metrics, targets and a robust review mechanism. This aims at learning and motivat-



You better get your own skill sets first and then think about skilling anyone!

Execution has always been India's bane. Visionary leaders can energise and motivate. But to make the impossible possible, they need to have a bureaucracy excelling in execution. In the last 20 years, not a single elected government has delivered what it promised in poll manifestos. Corporate India fares better with at least one in 10 companies successful in executing strategy.

Governments everywhere have to cope with the complexities of disruptions in the social sector, technology, macroeconomics, and sometimes self-initiated ones like demonetisation. The cry for accountability and transparency is getting louder. And with dismal failures in execution, India will see many of its flagship programmes lagging behind. It is now time for GoI to do more with less.

Skill India is a case in point. What we need before Skill India is perhaps a Skill Government mission. And, what's more, in this Budget season, a visionary leader can do this without much fund allocation.

Should governments be in the skilling business at all? Indeed, it is government's business to skill government 'servants' to execute the mission, improve productivity, take risks, think innovatively, work in teams and build leadership skills. Even as governments try to manoeuvre the execution juggernaut, they venture into bu-

ing the bureaucracy responsible to deliver even more.

Currently, Skill India activities seem almost like those of a training department of an average company where budgets for training are allocated to building employee capability. In reality, the kind of training availed by the employees most often has nothing to do with the company strategy and is mostly wasted. An average company does not align training to its strategic objectives.

Bureaucracy is not measured for the effectiveness of policy but the elected government is. Bureaucrats are trained to ensure compliance to archaic processes. Skilling them in execution and measuring them on results will be key in achieving the policy outcomes. If by using a framework like the Balanced Execution Agenda they can be skilled to go beyond mere numbers to creating an ecosystem of entrepreneurs, skill seekers and trainers, then India will succeed in driving the next wave of development.

The framework will help equip to

translate the mission into actionable goals, set metrics, fix targets and align ministries and people to deliver the shared vision.

...Am I a Computer Disk?

When Prime Minister Narendra Modi urges risk-taking, he means these kinds of skills with risk mitigation tools. This will eliminate mediocrity, profiteering, corruption and favouritism that still prevails today. It will also define how and when the government will know it is successful.

GoI should mandate its own autonomous body, a Centre for Innovation in Public Systems (Cips), to catch the bureaucrats young at the IAS Academy itself, in addition to bringing skills to experienced officers.

Cips can make use of the CSR funds and NGOs with a similar mission. Budget savings: upwards of ₹10,000 crore. Elimination of corruption and profiteering from Skill India: 100%. But who wants this, right?

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