

STARTUP INDIA INITIATIVE: THE ROLE OF ACADEMIA - A SPOTLIGHT

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Abstract: Startup India the flagship initiative of the Government of India, intended to build a strong eco-system for nurturing innovation and Startups in the country is directed towards sustainable economic growth and generation large scale employment opportunities. The Government through this initiative aims to empower Startups to grow through innovation and design. In order to meet the objectives of the initiative, in January 2016, the Government of India announced the Action Plan that addresses all aspects of the Startup ecosystem. The Government initiated the action plan with a hope to accelerate spreading of the Startup movement. One of the three pillars on which the action plan is based is the Industry-Academia Partnership and Incubation. The present paper throws light on the role of Academia to act in line with the startup India initiative. The paper is a brief discussion on the reforms that the academia should undergo in order to keep the spirit of Startup India initiative alive.

Keywords: Startup, Industry-Academia Partnership

Introduction

The long standing debate though still pops out here and there in the management intelligentsia as to which 'M' is the most significant amongst the four Ms – Money, Materials, Machines and Men. However each managerial thought, discussion or debate may perhaps not end up elsewhere except commending the fact that 'Men', which symbolizes Human Resource, in the four Ms has the edge over others for the straight forward reason that Men can manage other three Ms, therefore proving it time and again that Manpower and Human Resource has a pivotal role to play in the flourish of any entity.

The success of any entity, say it; a family, residential community, charity, business concern or to that matter the nation itself largely depends on the quality of human resources it is equipped with. The history has made it evident that it is not that countries with enormous natural, financial and other resources have flourished, but those with even mediocre human resources have managed to summit success in spite of living in adversity. Making it obvious that it is not the resources but the art of generating an idea that utilizes resources to mould it into utility is something that counts.

It is an undisputed fact that the basic hub of human resource development is the academia of a nation. The education system by and large decides the fate of a nation, because the educational institutes are the entities which can inspire wonders to happen. If we speak about India in specific, as a nation we are known to be prosperous on one hand and adverse on the other. The country has world reputed educational institutes which are well known across the world for their best of the class teaching, learning and development activities, infrastructure and innovation. These students attract the best of the students in the country indicating a win-win situation to both the aspirant and the institute. On the other hand there are widely dispersed institutes across the length and breadth of the nation both in public and private sector which are deprived the minimum requirements that foster innovation and creativity.

India abundant with youth has the highest potential to create wonders, however due to various reasons the aspirants see dearth of opportunities due to paucity of entrepreneurship in especially sub-urban and rural areas.

The Startup India initiative is expected to boost the opportunity for those who wish to excel by giving wings to their thoughts providing employment on one hand and supporting the Make in India initiative on the other. The real challenge is for the academia; the success of Startup India would largely depend on the quality of human resource that the educational institutes develop and provide in the sub-urban and rural areas for the betterment of the startup initiative. In light of this, the paper showcases some aspects where the academia especially the higher education needs to improve, to boost energy for the Startup India initiative.

Conventional to Pragmatic Approach

It is an unconcealed fact that rigidity in adaptation of the teaching and learning approaches has really been a bane for fostering innovation in the educational institutes which impart higher education. The present curriculum at most universities is confined only to impart the 'in the book' concept and the practicality that links concept with reality really lacks. It is time the academia both at policy making and implementing levels to understand that the syllabi is not updating at the level and pace of the developments in the industry. We are living in a globalized era and have been witnessing developments at the unprecedented pace around us; perhaps one thing that hasn't changed is the class room setup and teaching methodology over the years in the sub-urban and rural India. The teacher and student are caught up in a teaching-learning cycle which though keeps them busy entire year; but makes them isolated from the real world ending up in producing a well learned but un-updated graduate who cannot understand the intricacies of the industry in real. It is not the either parties to blame for, but the system itself is as such which keeps them stuck to the pre established schedules compromising objectivity.

Hence adopting a pragmatic approach is the need of the hour, however not at the cost of conventional principles. The pupil should no doubt be imparted with the conceptual knowledge but also should be provided with exposure to practicality and dealing with problems in reality.

The students need to be encouraged to work on genuine projects which indeed would be a seed for an easy startup for them as intrapreneurs and entrepreneurs. The adaptation of pragmatic approach in teaching and learning would keep both the teacher and learner abreast with the latest in the industry and there by the educational institutes would be in a position to contribute for the supply of human resources with employability skills and add to the flourish of Startup India initiative.

Syllabi a bottleneck

It is well known fact that 'what we teach' is 'what we make'. Teaching the outdated cannot make an updated aspirant. The students after spending years together at college level come out with concepts and skills that may not be in use, most of the students take up short-term bridging courses to learn such concepts and skills which the industry requires; making it apparent that the syllabus which is learnt over the years has not been serving the purpose, emphasizing that the curriculum needs to be dynamic keeping update continuously so as to keep aspirants abreast with the latest and make most of the learning happen during the formal institutional education.

Environment congenial to Creativity and Innovation

Fostering creativity can create wonders in any field, it is because of the creative individuals even the civilizations that were nascent have enjoyed golden eras. The institutes in addition to imparting regular content have to take measures to provide an environment congenial to creativity. An ideal academia is which nurtures creativity and is open to accept novel ideas. In addition to regular academics, the institutes have to establish incubation centers where new ideas are respected and the feasible are tested. The students need to be offered with problems that need attention and think over it to design mechanisms to overcome them. Elements of creativity like Conceptual fluency, Flexibility, Complexity orientation and Originality need to be nurtured amongst the aspirants to foster innovation and creativity.

The educational system has to test not only the convergent thinking abilities but also must design instruments to test and give weightage to the divergent thinking abilities of students which indeed would harness creativity and innovation in them. Human problems need creative solutions and it is the onus of the educational institutes to make aspirants as Creative-Intelligent who can stand up to startup ventures on their own and initiate change for the nation's development.

The main objective of Startup India is to give wings to the creative enterprises, and the responsibility of imbibing creativity lies in the educational institutes, which can only be done by thinking out of the box and commending the divergent thinking ability of pupil.

Establishing Educational Networks

It is not that nothing worthy is happening in institutes of higher education, it is that whatever good is happening stays in disguise and is unknown to others. The widely diffused educational institutes working in a system which is complex and hard to coordinate is dampening the probability of inventing. Therefore to proliferate innovation the necessity of an educational network is inevitable. By establishing educational network even the remote institute of the country can be linked to the mainstream and enable them to witness latest developments and gives them a chance to add on.

Even a small idea generated and shared from one corner can be incubated and further developed in any other part of the country by the enthusiast thereby enhancing the probability to create wonders.

The Role of State Governments'

The success of Startup India largely depends in the way the state governments design their strategies to support the initiative. From the perspective of academics, the state governments need to design policies to encourage and reward educational institutions that excel in generation and evaluation of new startup ideas. Though it has been a year, nearly half the states in India have not established a startup policy in their state. It is only when, the states come up with the overall startup policy with proper emphasis on the role of academia, can bring justice to the startup initiative. A few states are in the process of establishing startup policy and all the north-eastern states are yet to begin.

The states need to design an in depth plan to foster entrepreneurial skills amongst students during their schooling and college education, and the fruits of which can be witnessed in the years to come.

Further the state governments' need to support ideas that are generated in the educational institutions through various funding schemes and assist for further research.

Industry-Academia Interaction

It is obvious that academia has to make pupil industry ready, but unfortunately by and large the academic entities work isolated from the industry and hence cannot understand the requirements of the industry, which indeed would end up in producing graduates who are not employable.

In order to keep the Startup initiative moving, the Industry-Academia Interaction is the need of the hour. Over the past few years this interaction though has been seen in reputed institutes and institutes which are located in the metropolitans however are limited to only a few sectors of the industry.

The institutes located in the sub-urban and rural areas of the country are deprived of the industry interaction; it is only when interaction is made mandatory to both the academia and industry at various levels, the pupil can benefit and further can contribute for the Startup.

A sense has to be created that Industry-Academia interaction can happen only when it is felt as the corporate responsibility by the Industry and academia responsibility by the educational institutions.

Conclusion

Startup India is an initiation to provide opportunity to those enthusiasts who can take up entrepreneurship, the central government has designed a user friendly policy to attract those who would like to give wings to their business idea. The state governments have been joining the movement by preparing state level policies and taking up initiatives. The success of any policy designed for the country's good largely depends on the ability of various entities to stand up to expectations for the successful implementation of the policy. With the Startup initiative the doors are open for those who wish to enterprise, but the real problem is the availability of people with employable skills and who can contribute by generating novel ideas; here comes the role of academic institutions that produce the human resource.

The success of an initiative depends on the contribution of various entities associated with it, without employable human resource the Startup initiative would end up in despair. Therefore it becomes inevitable for the academia to stand up for reforms and initiate policies that can foster innovation and creativity, if the academia focuses on the issues discussed in the article and initiates measures in this direction, the Startup India initiative would stand worthwhile.

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