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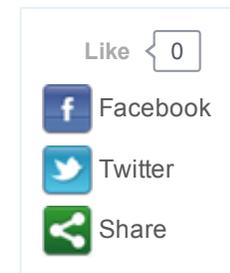
‘Creating viable skill development market in India would take a decade’

SHAILENDRA TYAGI | New Delhi | 22nd Aug 2015

Sanjeev Duggal, CEO & Director, Centum Learning says that India's skill development market is still in the making as every stakeholder, be it the government or the skill providers, remain in the learning mode. Creating a viable skill development market would be possible only when there is an aspirational demand for acquiring skills in India, a trait that is still missing among the unskilled youths.

Q: Given that India's huge demographic dividend largely remains unskilled, how big is the challenge to skill the targeted 500 million by 2022?

A: I think it is one of the most daunting tasks in front of the country, the government and the



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industry not because of the huge numbers that we are discussing but also due to the huge socio-economic fabric inside which this has to be done. The biggest challenge is the huge funding needed to create the whole skill ecosystem. We need over one lakh crore a year to be able to achieve the target that we have put before us. Funds are also needed to create infrastructure and to scale up our capacities. The fact is that over 70% of India's workforce requires skills but most of them cannot pay for it which simply means that there is no consumer market for it. So the skill development market currently is surviving on government's grants.



Sanjeev Duggal

Q: How long would it take for India to emerge as a huge market for providing skills?

A: There is no denying the fact that there is huge need for skills in India which means there is an economic opportunity but the market is yet to be created because there is no demand for skill especially from the unskilled labour force. Developing one's skills is still not aspirational in India. People are rather apathetic towards acquiring skills. Plus India's socio-economic fabric often works against it. Since a lot of skill requirement pertains to the bottom of the pyramid where persuading an unskilled worker, especially a woman, to move out of their homes for skill education becomes a challenge. So, a lot of time and effort would be required to create and evangelise this whole social change before a demand-fed market can be created in India.

Q: Does India have the required wherewithal — the skill eco-system — to provide the needed skills?

A: Based on our global experience — we work in 21 emerging economies — I think that India is far ahead of many of its emerging counterparts. The whole skill eco-system that is being created in India



suggests that we are doing a lot on that front. For example, the creation of the new skill development ministry, the National Skill Development Corporation or the Prime Minister's voice and support behind it and the CRS norms would all contribute toward our efforts to skill 500 million targeted youth. However, while we are doing a lot, some of it requires getting more and more fine-tuned. I feel that the skill development capacities need to be created in an intelligent manner whereby I expect the government to create some kind of entry barriers to discourage non-serious skill providers. We need serious players who have the required wherewithal and the depth to actually stay in the journey and meet the national target. Skilling India is at least a ten year long story so companies which can last for that long should be allowed to get in.

Q: How is the Indian government responding to such a demand (creating entry barriers) from the industry?

A: What is happening is that the government is also learning and as they are learning they are responding. For example in Bihar, where we are setting-up six multi-skill centers, the government said that under the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana, they would allocate numbers to us if we set-up these iconic training centers. Only five or six companies came forward for setting up such centers. That is why we insist on entry barriers as setting up training centres requires resources, seriousness and acumen. So you need to bring only the serious players in and allocate capacities to them. And I think we (government and the industry) are indeed moving in the right direction.

Q: You have been in partnership with the National Skill Development Corporation to impart skills to the youth. What verticals do you specialise in?

A: We are in multiple domains. We are in agriculture, construction, telecom, IT, retail, autos and we are also present in green jobs. Rather than being driven by the domain, we are driven by the opportunities meaning where possibilities for jobs creation are more. Highest amount of skill gap is in the construction industry because to build the infrastructure that India aspires to create, India doesn't have the skilled construction workers like crane operators or masons etc. Textile is another area where more efforts to impart skills is required. The gap is also high in the beauty and wellness sector. So, how do you get the resources, how does one execute it? Dealing with the scale and time challenges involved in it is a complex execution issue which I think the government is getting around.

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