



Sadhana Educational & Empowerment Foundation's (SEEF)
Sadhana Centre for Management & Leadership Development
(SCMLD)

Seminar: “**Learning from the Leaders**” - Series XI

Theme: “**Qualification vs. Education: Challenges in Building Employability & Entrepreneurship**”

Venue: **Yashada, Pune** | Date: **31st July & 1st August, 2010**

CONCEPT NOTE

Dear Sir / Madam,

Of all the graduates - engineering, management and others - whom we churn out in India every year, about 80% to 85% are not employable. At the same time organizations everywhere are frantic for skilful, knowledgeable and attitudinally right people. The world is, in the near future, set to face an acute shortage of manpower due to ageing populations. In India, on the contrary, we have a population explosion, which is, however, unfit for employment. In other words, we are producing qualified youth in millions year after year, who have no employable qualities or skill sets. These graduates in turn seek employment but not work (not to speak of hard work or output / outcomes). Commitment, responsibility, accountability, punctuality, ownership etc. are missing in the employees of today. This is the reality today notwithstanding seminar speeches, claims and the public posturing. Indians' (in India) productivity is nowhere near world standards. Who is responsible is not the issue. What is to be done is the issue. Instead of being 100% professional and committed at work, we Indians suffer from too much sentimentalism and personalisation, at workplaces. Hence employment, salary, perks and benefits are more important than WORK & delivery of outcomes. Even poverty cannot be reduced without people “working” hard and wholeheartedly. This is not to suggest that human issues are not to be given due attention. But what about work & promises to be delivered?

The situation is more alarming now. With 40 years of a variety of work experience, (of which 24 years have been in the field of Post Graduate Education and Training) I am concerned about certain behavioural trends of the new generation (Zap 86 - born after 1986, the ME generation). They are smart, trendy, free, uninhibited, fashionable, techno savvy and want to be successful in no time. Yes, admirable indeed. They are being quickly emulated in the rural hinterland by the youth who are deprived of access to good education and opportunities, as well. Much of this is thanks to channels, serials, the unreal “reality” shows and the Bollywood - Hollywood glamour & glitter syndrome. The entire focus is on how to appear good rather than being good. The matter of concern is their ignorance of the fact that success cannot be achieved without painstaking

efforts, difficulty and discomforts. They are not inclined to accept the fact that the road to success is always under construction. They crave for pleasures minus the attendant difficulties. Then they get into stress, conflicts and reactions. Persistence, perseverance and patience are seldom seen. Restraint, discipline, dedication, self-regulation and focused hard work - the foundations of success are considered unnecessary and inconsequential. Also they have a different understanding of the word 'freedom'. Subordination to the purpose, values & ethos of organisation, family / society, is considered as constraints to their freedom of choice. Unquestioning acceptance of their views excites them. A 'no' upsets them. In short, maturity, depth and articulation are absolutely lacking. It is also ok as they are an aspirational generation. What is, however disturbing, is their insistence on their ways with no ability or attitude of listening, reflection or analysis. They are in a hurry to have the fruits without preparing the soil, planting seeds, nurturing roots and allowing the time required for fruition of the tree. They demand everything fast but are unwilling to run fast themselves to deliver work / organisational outcomes. They would prefer someone else run for them and they collect medals and trophies for it. They throng multiplexes but don't even bother to enlist their names in voters list let alone go out and vote.

I am aware that these are sweeping general statements. However, my experience of many years on campus is that students, of late, are absolutely averse to reading, research and exploration. They are easily bored. Laptop information and mobile phone language are considered knowledge and communication respectively. There is no unyielding tenacity to acquire knowledge, skills and cultivate habits essential to excel. The concept of "nation first, society next and self last" has been replaced by "self first and nothing else". However, no objection can be raised against this also, as it is an individual choice. However, the problem occurs when they expect organizations, society, government and everything & everyone else should cater to their "individual choices". They want to be treated as adults when it comes to their instinct driven pleasure items and when it comes to pain items, which will make them competent & distinct, someone else should motivate them. This attitude of "not being responsible" is a serious concern. I, me, myself is ruling the minds. That is, expectations from others are high but at the same time they are disinclined to live up to anyone else's expectations. However, we cannot blame them. We the society, which created them is also one which seeks to take more and give less- be it traders, producers, professionals or the political class. Therefore, we the 'compromise / retro' generations, also have no right to complain. But the concerns are still concerns. What is to be done by all of us is the question. There is no point in looking to china's awesome speed, performance and productivity and we self-justify that our "democratic values" and "freedom" are more important than wealth & wellbeing, and poverty, filth and corruption are the price for it. We are in self-delusion. There is no shortcut to or substitute for discipline, hard work and vision driven proactive & uncompromising action for peace, prosperity, harmony and happiness.

Can competence be achieved without doing things and learning? Before making our contributions, (giving) can we take, as we desire? Can pleasure be had without painstaking efforts? Does the word “pleasure” have any meaning without pain? If there were “finishing lines” to a few men’s quest to know and learn, could there have been so many breakthroughs? Would the world have been where it is today if some had not asked “why” and “why not” and untiringly pursued those questions with passion and unrelenting actions? Can we create a “future” without sacrifices? Can there be excellence without extra stretch and rigorous practice every day? Without confronting difficulties and moving against currents, can one become stronger, faster or go higher? These fundamental questions are not in the realm of life and behaviour / work, or at institutions today. The family and the education / religion / culture / society system(s) slowly and steadily silenced the analytical, creative and exploratory characteristics gifted by the nature. But what is the way out? A complete systemic change in education can bring about drastic changes. But alas- innovation universities with all out autonomy are being created but existing universities and the skills developing institutions in the informal sector are being strangled with controls, controls and controls.

At SCMLD, we have all along been emphasizing and working on aspects like reverence & gratitude (to nature & parents), commitment, dedication, honesty, truthfulness, conviction, hard work, learning by doing, drill driven habit forming inputs, and so on. We are grooming youngsters to exemplify these characteristics, of course with herculean efforts in re-engineering minds and to chisel out the unwanted acquired / accumulated dysfunctional parts from their beings.

This seminar, which you have kindly consented to contribute to, aims to make our students aware of your wisdom gained from your being in business / industry / profession and living life so far facing realities. You may like to enlighten them with the realities of the business world- environmental, strategic, social, functional, behavioural, regulatory, and hierarchical and so on. Kindly share with them the characteristics and deliverables that would make them succeed in the real world as also put before them the issues that render nearly 90% of management and other graduates unemployable today and as to how they can be in the distinctive 10%. Let your story and experience inspire them.

Advice, prescriptions and theoretical postulates could be, ideally, avoided. Everything written in this letter is purely my concern as a teacher, from my own perception of things around. It is not necessary that you subscribe to these. Therefore, please feel free to share your views and wisdom. We look forward to the honour of your being with us and learning from you. From the deliberations let the students pick up what each one understands and accept.

On the other side, today the deserving and aspiring youth are denied quality education and skill development opportunities. There is also a huge shortage of good teachers and mentors. There

are youngsters with illuminating brilliance and inspiring creativity and accomplishments, better than our generation or the ones before us. But these are few and rare in a large population of the kind described earlier. Can we facilitate a quantum leap in the number of these rare species, is the challenge. My view is that we can - provided we the like-minded elders and institutions work together focussed and determined. Today, in general, the youth and our system as a whole are on the wrong path. At SCMLD we are doing our best to offer life changing education. Also at least 10% of our students are being inspired to be entrepreneurs with a 'purpose'- of providing products & problem solving services to people for a better society. We need to multiply this number as well. We look forward to your support and learning from you.

With warm regards,

M. S. Pillai

Founder Director, SCMLD

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