



IT Resources - Are we action ready?

The world knows that India is riding high on its IT tide, but with every tide there is a powerful undercurrent - It's the nature's balancing act. Be it the American Manufacturing revolution or the Renaissance or the Restructuring of Japan's economy after the Hiroshima & Nagasaki or The establishment of West German Industrial powerhouse - the shortage of skilled labor was the common pain point for the architects of these economic giants.

It is natural that the trailblazers of Indian IT phenomena are having sleepless nights with the acute shortage of skilled IT resource. A lot of concerted effort is underway to mitigate this demand and supply lopsidedness. Infosys, Wipro, Hexaware, Accenture, and some others have started their own IT finishing academies which polish the pedagogical skills of fresh graduated into battle ready IT skills.

Why is this industry so demanding? Are the technical & coding skills not sufficient? Are the educational institutions listening? We will answer these questions below, but let's look at some facts to bolster our point above -

- ◆ Only 10% of the 300,000 IT employable graduates every year have the requisite skills for on-boarding a project - According to NASSCOM Vice President, Mr. Ganesh Natarajan.
- ◆ India will face an acute shortage of 500,000 skilled IT resources by 2010 - According to a joint Nasscom-McKinsey Study.
- ◆ Only about 10% - 15% of the 2 million Non-engineering graduates are employable in the BPO industry - They need re-skilling in personality development & accent modulation

IT Industry - Looking beyond the curricula

In my various encounters with educational institutions heads, one common thread I could identify, barring a few exceptions, was the absence of clarity vis-à-vis the IT industry needs. The perception of a skilled resource ends at the programming and algorithmic expertise - which is far from truth. This calls for a tighter synergy between the Industry and the Educational institutions.

If we are to maintain our position as the preferred Global Software destination, then the syllabi in our schools and colleges have to add a window for IT corporate skill-set. Most of our course framework is at best archaic and out-of-sync with the reality. We, as a nation are one of the most highly qualified but woefully under-skilled. The onus lies on the architects of our educational system - We need to have more industrialists and entrepreneurs on the decision making bodies so that not all our learning is 'lost in translation'.

Why the Gap?

The growth momentum has to be sustained - but how? The world looks up to India for its software & services needs - the projects keep rolling in. IT powerhouses scour the campuses for ready-to-work resources in vain. The resources are highly skilled and with top IQ, but not yet delivery material. Some soul searching attributes the gap in our educational system & industry needs to the following-

- ◆ Absence of project & vocation based course structure in majority of the institutions
- ◆ Except for a very selective group of institutions (e.g., IITs, IIMs, XLRI, Symbiosis, and some RECs), Industrial and departmental tie ups are minimal - This eliminates any opportunity for a job-oriented framework in the syllabi



- ◆ Lack of government or Corporate sponsored funds for innovation & Industrial research in institutions. Majority of the universities in US & Europe get a large chunk of their research funding from corporate houses.
- ◆ Antiquated British era syllabi in institutions which have lost their relevance with the current market dynamics and economic eco-system. Revisions, if any have failed to do justice to the students.
- ◆ Emphasis on theoretical & empirical concepts rather than on product creation, and innovation. This framework saps the latent creativity and at the same time makes rote masters out of students.
- ◆ Project, Program, and Portfolio management are integral to any IT practice - Majority of the computer science syllabi do not have the slot for these
- ◆ Quality Assurance and Software Delivery Methodology form the core of any project framework. They are conspicuous by their absence in our syllabi.
- ◆ Personality development, Community work, Event management, Extra-curricular achievements, Leadership development - These find few takers among the decision makers of our institutions.

The Silver bullet

India is an emerging economy - but still not a developed nation. The reason - We don't need to look far - We are still trying to revamp and modernize the British age processes and infrastructure instead of daring to create new ones using our indigenous talent and creativity. But, times have changed and with the need came the impetus - The impetus to march in sync with the industrial growth. Necessity gives way to invention and so came the concept of "IT Finishing schools". What are these? Are they autonomous or affiliated?

These are re-skilling institutions and can be private, corporate, or government sponsored. The purpose of these academies is to bridge the gap between the educational system and the IT corporate needs. Students graduate from these academies with a 'certificate' of being ready to on-board a live project. These new concept centers provide the missing links in the areas of - Personality and communication skills development, Project Management & Software Delivery Methodology, Quality assurance, Programming and coding methodology standards, and Client and Vendor relationship management etc.

It's high time our educational system is revamped with an eye on the future so that the students are in tune with the reality. The need of the hour is to incorporate the IT specific skills into our course framework.

About the Author:

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