



### Lead Story

template it had developed for its IT education? Are the core strengths of NIIT coming in handy for training in sectors which are new to it? And will it make use of the infrastructure that it has already built up across the country in the last 30 years?

#### NEW TERRITORY

Sanjay Bahl, President, Yuva Jyoti says that NIIT will first focus on North India. "We have seven operational centres as of today. This year we plan to set up 50 centres. We will focus on Haryana, UP, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Rajasthan, and slum areas of Delhi. Of course, the Government of Bihar is getting active, so we might be tempted to enter there too, and so too in MP and Odisha." The effort will be to cater to smaller towns and villages, because the youth in these areas are getting interested in service sector. While centres in smaller locations will become spoke centres, the centres in bigger locations will become placement hubs. "Eighty to eighty five per cent people want jobs near home, at the most 40 to 50 km away," Bahl informs.

In each location they enter, the infrastructure will be completely new. "The design has to be unique. We are teaching skills for the service sector. It will be experiential learning, and we will have a skill lab." For example, in retail, they will actually have showroom set up where students will be trained.

Bahl informs that the training programmes that NIIT has already conducted in fields like BPO and banking, and the pilots it has done through NIIT Foundation in Chhindwara, has given them the confidence to train in other service sector fields too. "What we did in IT, we need to do in other sectors too."

Drawing from its IT experience, NIIT realises the importance of industry connect and understanding their skill requirement. The industry is constantly kept in loop regarding curriculum development. Thus, for example, in hospitality McDonald, Deyyani Foods, KFC, Café Coffee Day and Barista have been roped in. In retail, Vishal Megamart and Capsons have been roped in.

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A big question is that at some stage the Sector Skills Councils will be formed and at that stage the courses will have to be aligned to the standards these councils set. Bahl says that the councils will take time to be formed, and in any way, the councils will be taking inputs from the same set of companies as the current training providers are taking, hence there will not be a marked difference.

#### PRIOR IT LESSONS

A big advantage that accrues to NIIT on account of its IT competency is that it will be able to leverage that in its pedagogy, making training cost-effective. "A typical challenge is that of providing 1,000 competent trainers in different locations. However, through satellite and internet connectivity, we can have industry expert sessions in all locations at the same time, beamed across the country with the help of technology. Earlier the experts used to come to our office to deliver lecture, but now, through web, they are delivering the lecture from their own offices."



Possibilities of vertical mobility: The growth that NIIT facilitates from certificate programme to professional certificate programme

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This does not mean that no expertise will be available at the centres. Right from the stage a candidate walks in, student connect is important at each stage. There will be counselling to guide him about appropriate career. Each student will get a Nokia mobile with seven to eight applications, including dictionary. He can mark his attendance through blue tooth. An important facility is recording provision on the mobile, so that he can record his voice and home and come up for assessment next day. This is because students hesitate to speak up in front of others.

Communication skills, including English, life skills and computer form an essential course of each of these service sector courses, as these careers entail consumer interface. Until students clear these foundation modules, they will not advance to the next level of career module.

For trade-specific skills, industry experts will be invited to skill labs and will converse with students. Students will get to work in simulated job environment. For example, they will get to interact with customers as part of training. Industry visits are also built in into the course.

Assessment will be done on weekly and monthly basis, and videolog of each student will be posted on website, so that employer companies can do the first level of screening of candidates on website itself. Bahl informs that assessment system has been devised based on interaction with the industry. And to remove any bias, a candidate gets assessed by a three-person team. If the score is less than 70 per cent, a candidate has to take remedial classes, and if it is less than 60 per cent, he has to repeat. He admits that while commitment level of a candidate may be high, the background that these students come from often acts as a hindrance.

The first batch in basic course started in December 2011. While the basic course is of four-month duration (192 hours), there are advanced courses in trades like mobile repair and accountancy, which are of six-month duration. And a candidate can come back to Yuva Jyoti for professional course after gaining some work experience (see chart).

The course fee for a basic course is in the range of ₹5,000 to 8,000, and for advanced course, ₹14,000. There is provision for bank loan in collaboration with the Central Bank of India, and scholarship for BPL candi-



Getting groomed to take on the world: A classroom of NYJ for certificate programme under NSDC partnership

dates, SC/ST candidates, and girl child in Haryana (given the abysmal sex ratio in that state).

#### THE UNIQUE CHALLENGES

Bahl realises that in such a huge operation, quality consistency and low cost delivery are equally important. While NIIT Yuva Jyoti draws on the rich experience of NIIT and follows the core processes that NIIT has been following, a major challenge that it is facing is that the target audience is new. These are dropouts from small locations, not graduates. These are not to be found in any one location like school or college, but have to be traced. The teams actually have to do door-to-door knocking and road shows.

Service sector, even though aspirational, also faces the problem of social acceptance. Parents are still reluctant to let their son do these new kinds of jobs. Thus parent counselling is equally important, which NIIT is doing. Students have found to hesitate McDonald because they feel they will have to wash utensils, and have been pleasantly surprised during McDonald visit that the process is automated; girl students are reluctant to leave home in trousers and had to be convinced that they can change at the work place itself. Bahl, however, is hopeful that once a few students get placed, the social acceptance will come. As it is, he narrates the incident of a proud parent telling the Yuva Jyoti team, "No matter where my son gets a job, you have transformed my son." That transformation, we have seen in 23-year-old Yudhishtir too. ■