



Financial Chronicle

New Delhi
4 August, 2009

Educational events and marketing

Educational event marketing has been a mainstay in the pharmaceutical industry for many years. However, it is now gaining prominence as an effective marketing tool in many other industries. With rising pressure to find new ways to differentiate companies and products, marketers are using targeted educational events to build brand loyalty and enhance sales.

Sometimes educational event marketing is confused with event marketing, particularly with hospitality, travel, social or sporting events, where a motivational speaker is part of the programme. A major difference is that while educational event marketing often includes social components, social events complement the educational programme rather than overpower it.

Educational event marketing is designed to provide value to customers through enrichment that they might not otherwise have access to due to costs or convenience. Educational events are most effective when a company's products are not featured as presentations. If the event is professionally managed, customers will know who is sponsoring it and will respect the decision not to invite them to a sales pitch. Recently, a software firm from the US conducted workshops in major metros to educate potential software developers and entrepreneurs in medical transcription business. Last heard, this company was able to associate with four Indian developers involving \$50 million.

In highly competitive industries, educational events offer marketers the opportunity to create a partnership with the customer. For example, a restaurant supply firm was facing increasing pressure from a new, low-priced com-



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Companies need to identify their core strengths and offer these to their potential customers through properly designed and conceived educational events —AP

petitor. The supplier could either enter into a price war to protect its market share or strive to maintain market share by providing added value to its customers. Since the price war would not only lower the firm's margins, but also affect the ability of the firm to market its products at higher prices in the future, the supplier decided to provide added value through an integrated educational event programme

for restaurant managers. The firm sponsored a series of half-day events on restaurant management, featuring business professors and industry leaders. The programmes were targeted at the supply firm's best customers.

The participation of the supply firm's sales managers in the workshops positioned the sales managers as partners in helping their customers solve their problems.

As a result, the firm was able to maintain its market share and gain insight into new ways to support customer needs.

Educational events as one part of the marketing mix are most effective when used for business-to-business marketing, where direct sales are important. The event offers the sales and marketing staff an opportunity to interface with customers in an environment where the customer is not dis-

tracted by the pressures of office or phone calls from other departments. For instance, global packaging material manufacturing giant Tech Pak of France constantly conducts one-to-one seminars on latest packaging innovations. Small firms benefit immensely from such associations with international players.

Careful research and design are required to use educational events to address challenges in the marketplace. Educational events can build customer loyalty, enhance corporate image, improve sales, differentiate a company, build advocates in the marketplace, and showcase a company's knowledge of industry issues.

However, an educational event that works for one company will not work as effectively for another, even in the same industry. This is because of the unique competencies of each company. So, companies will need to identify their core strengths and offer these to their potential customers through properly designed and conceived educational events.

Extended further, even fast moving consumer goods marketers could use such techniques. For instance, a company making skincare lotion and other products could hold seminars on skincare, skin nourishment and so on. Similarly, a cosmetics company could go for educational events involving barbers, beauticians and so on. The potential for such events may not have any borders. These are applicable to all industries, irrespective of market dynamics. The savvy marketer must always look out for the right target mix.

The writer is CEO and managing director, CustomerLab Solutions. These are his personal views

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NIIT plans to increase seat capacity in China by 10,000

Looks to set up operations in east African, west Asian nations

SREERUPA MITRA

Bangalore

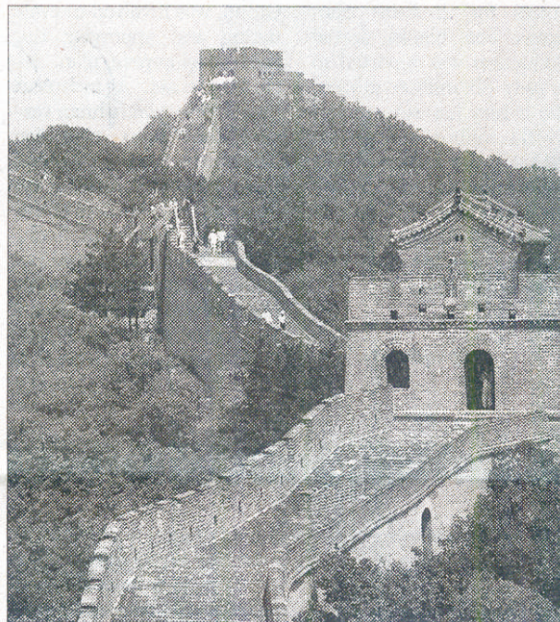
NIIT, the country's largest learning solutions provider, is planning to increase its seat capacity in China by 10,000 seats taking it to a total of 60,000 this year.

"We see China as a growth destination and expect revenue from the nation to increase in the coming years. At present, China accounts for about 15 per cent of our revenue," said G Raghavan, president of Global Individual Learning Solutions, NIIT.

The company has 180 centres in China with 50,000 students. China has been witnessing a sharp rise in demand for IT education in the last couple of years and NIIT has been in the market since 1997.

"We expect China to deliver greater revenues in future as the demand scenario is continuing to pick up," added Raghavan.

The overall size of the IT education in China is unknown as no industry survey has been done on the same. However, as per industry reports, the Chinese IT outsourcing industry is witnessing a robust



growth of over 24 per cent compound annual growth rate (CAGR).

China is likely to witness the largest shortage of skills in the next five to 10 years and this scenario is similar to the one in India. By 2010, the Indian IT and ITES industry will require 8,50,000 additional skilled manpower, while China will require over 5 million skilled IT professionals by

2015, industry reports said.

In addition, the NIIT is also looking to increase its seat capacity in India by 25,000-40,000 annually. This is a drop compared to last year, when the company was increasing the number of seats by 15 per cent per year.

"We have decided to limit the rate of our seat capacity expansion in India to single digits in order to bal-

The Chinese IT outsourcing industry is witnessing a growth of over 24 per cent CAGR

ance our growth and profitability through capacity utilization," said Raghavan. NIIT operates about 500 centres in India and has about 5 lakh students.

Further, NIIT, which already has presence in 30 global destinations, is also looking to set up operations in few east African and west Asian nations in the coming 6-8 months time.

However, Raghavan points out that the company's prime focus is to consolidate its position in the existing nations and increase its market share in these destinations, rather than expanding into newer territories.

shreerupamitra
@mydigitalfc.com

Dataquest

National

15 August, 2009



Learning in Tough Times

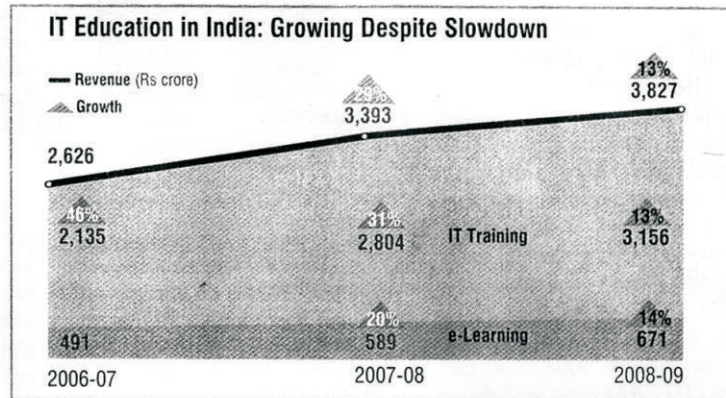
Despite the slowdown sentiments and reduced emphasis on training by companies, private players ensured that Indian IT education remains on a firm wicket

The Dow Jones industrial average fell by 778 points, the BSE-Sensex crashed by 2,000 points; all in a single day's trading—the financial meltdown of FY '09 which is still continuing in FY '10 has started looking even worse than the Great Depression of the '30s. To add to the grim scenario, Indian IT companies have joined their global counterparts in laying off employees. In such an environment of foreboding and apprehension, the last thing you would expect is for the IT training market to grow.

But surprise of all surprises, the Indian IT education market (private sector only consisting of IT training and e-learning exports) has grown by 13% to reach Rs 3,827 crore in FY '09, up from Rs 3,393 crore in the previous fiscal. Even though the figures may not seem impressive at the first look, the truth of the matter is that in the recessionary phase—when most companies are downsizing and training is, therefore, last on the priority list—a double-digit growth calls for celebration.

Corporate: Not All's Lost

The corporate training market also grew 11%, the reason could be that demand for on-site deployment of certified training resources far outweighs the number of layoffs. Unlike the US, even those who were handed pink slips were getting re-employed sooner than latter. Notwithstanding



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Most companies were downsizing, and training was the last thing on their priority list. That the IT training market still grew, was largely due to the initiatives in the public education sector and a rival in individual training market

the slowdown, Nasscom predicts that by 2010, the Indian software industry alone would require 2.3 mn professionals, and based on the current supply there is likely to be a shortfall of half a million. Perhaps that's why most Indian IT companies still invested in

the undisputed leader in IT education, grew by 61% in the last fiscal with a special focus on e-learning. This was because most companies were wary of spending on on-site training, owing to increasing costs on trainer and facility arrangement. In the last fiscal, NIIT clocked Rs 578 crore in corporate training, inking major deals with the Indian Army and also the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment. In fact, unlike previous years when it was largely enterprise-driven, the fillip to corporate IT training came in FY '09 from the government's increasing emphasis on employability training.

Aptech too bagged training

NIIT

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certification and training, albeit on a selective basis.

Much of this corporate training is in the form of e-learning—the two often get intertwined in many cases. NIIT,

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orders from a non-banking financial institution, the BPO division of a large software company, and an insurance firm. It further renewed contracts with three large BFSI clients apart from a UN agency and a leading BPO company.

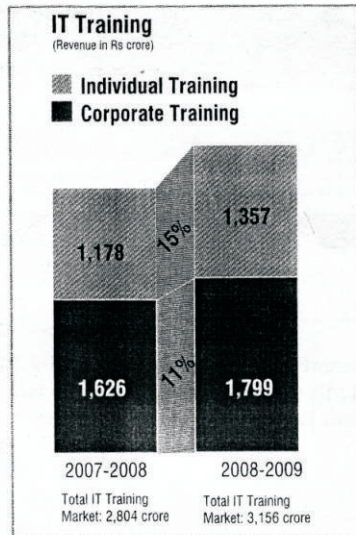
Acquisitions too helped: NIIT acquired controlling stake in Evolv Services (a leading provider of English language and communication training); Aptech acquired English language training business of Bengaluru based First English Education Institutes Limited (FEEIL), taking over the operations of four centers (located at Koramangala, Banshankari, Mathikere, and Rajajinagar).

Individual: Still Relevant

Cynics continued running down the individual training segment, citing global meltdown as the cause of declining employment opportunities in the IT sector, therefore leading to IT training losing relevance. The sector, however, held its own and grew by 15%. It was once again NIIT (almost synonymous with individual training) that not just contributed the lion's share (Rs 431 crore) but also helped sustain the market.

During FY '09, NIIT saw over 4,38,000 enrollments, a growth of 13% over the previous year. It added around fifty education centers, taking the total number of NIIT education centers to around 11,000 by March 2009. This growth can be attributed to a slew of job-ready career courses and its flagship program, GNIIT. The aggressive brand campaigns for GNIIT on the electronic media seem to have paid off. Incidentally, GNIIT alone contributed a student registration intake of 20,000.

In addition, NIIT also tied up with Microsoft earlier this year for making available Microsoft certified professionals. As part of the program, GNIIT students appear for relevant Microsoft certification examinations. In the first phase itself,



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Individual training seems to have got a second lease of life—courses on infrastructure management, animation and major technologies from the likes of Cisco, EMC, Microsoft, Red Hat as well as training programs under various ministries were the elixir. Aggressive branding of programs like GNIIT also helped. Corporate training was largely driven by e-learning

over 9,000 students were trained using Microsoft's learning content, while in the first batch, 170 Microsoft Certified GNIITians were made available for industry absorption. The company also partnered with leading organizations like Wipro, HCL, and IBM for placement assistance.

With the business environment getting tougher by mid-year, NIIT responded to the changing market dynamics by launching intensive technology programs to make graduates 'job-ready' in ninety-nine days. Incidentally, the initiative was also acknowledged by the recent Nielsen-Week Survey as being amongst the best short-duration job ready courses in the country.

Infrastructure management appeared to be the next growth frontier

for most training majors. With the Nasscom-McKinsey report forecasting that India is strongly positioned to capture up to \$15 bn of the global remote infrastructure management market over the next four years, the demand for experienced workforce with highly specialized skill-sets was bound to go up.

Not to miss the bus, training companies like NIIT and Jetking started offering infrastructure management courses. NIIT brought together global technology giants Cisco, CompTIA, EMC, Microsoft, and Sun to co-design GNIIT (IMS) program. In addition, short duration, specialization programs, as well as a BSc (ITIM) from Kuvempu University were also part of the program.

NIIT's IMS course is currently being offered in 129 centers out of which over forty centers offered it on Cisco technologies. In FY '09, NIIT trained over 3,000 students in Cisco and over 5,000 students in storage technology using EMC. IMS students later got placements in companies like Aricent, Wipro, HCL, IBM, and NetEnrich.

Besides the flagship three-year GNIIT (IMS) program for aspiring college students, NIIT is also looking to tap working professionals and engineering students in the IMS space by offering nine to thirteen month certification mapped programs on technologies like networking, storage management, server management, desktop, and application management.

Jetking also forayed into IMS space by launching Masters in networking administration.

As per Nasscom estimates, out of 5 lakh plus engineering passouts a year, only 25% are considered employable owing to the outdated curriculum. With this in mind, Aptech took the lead with its 'Aptech for Engineers', a slew of specialized IT courses for engineering students. Under the program, students were given

Dataquest National 15 August, 2009



specialization options in popular application development frameworks like Sun Java and .NET.

Aptech also introduced another program for engineers—Aptech Certified Technology Specialist—along with Prometric to enable certification exams. Aptech would also be forging alliances with engineering colleges to offer Java courses and certification exam facility on the campus itself.

These apart, Aptech opened thirty-five new education centers and bagged a large order for training students from Nigeria, under the aegis of the India Window Program conducted for foreign nationals in India. It also got an enthusiastic response for the ITEC/SCAAP courses (sponsored by the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India), which cater to students from 156 countries across the globe. Training facilities were also commenced in Malaysia under an agreement signed with MDEC Malaysia and SNT Malaysia.

Its flagship brand—ACCP—was adjudged the 'Best ICT Training Program' in the 'Best ICT Choice of Mongolia-2007' competition.

Meanwhile, its hardware and networking arm, N-Power opened twenty new centers across India in smaller towns like Ghazipur, Haridwar, Moradabad, Rewari, Noida, Bolangir, Bilaspur, Dadar, Vashi, Jamnagar, Kanpur, and Bhubaneswar. N-Power also launched N-Power Certified Enterprise Systems Engineer (NCESE) program in collaboration with vendors like CompTIA and Red Hat. N-Power became the first institute in India to offer BSc in hardware and networking in collaboration with Karnataka State Open University.

Arena Animation tied up with MS University, Tirunelveli to offer a BSc Degree in Multimedia and Animation, at selected Arena Animation centers, following the SILM (Students Integrated Learning Model) for training with online examinations. In

India's Most Preferred IT Trainers	FY '09	FY '08	Growth (%)
NIIT	1,010	907	11
Aptech	285	234	22
Jetking	186	129	44
Educomp	174	93	87

The e-Learning Experts	FY '09	FY '08	Growth
Tata Interactive Systems	162	134	62
NIIT	138	100	38

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NIIT inked major deals with the Indian Army as well as the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment; Aptech signed up a UN agency as well as a leading BPO vendor; both of them signed up with a number of state governments too

the first quarter of 2009, new Arena centers were inaugurated at tier-2 cities like Surat, Nagpur, Udipi, Ghaziabad, Allahabad, Saharanpur, Durgapur, Kasganj, Kanpur, and Tirur.

ICT in Schools

During FY '09, almost all states took up the challenge of introducing computers in schools on a war footing, with Andhra Pradesh becoming the first state in India to offer ICT education to all its 1.8 mn school going children. Covering 5,000 government schools, the state government will be installing a total of 50,000 computing seats in the schools. The YSR Reddy-led Congress government has outsourced a five-year tenure project to leading educational IT companies like NIIT, Educomp, Everonn, Social Computers, and TeraSoft based on a BOOT model. NIIT incidentally bagged the lion's share (worth Rs 172.8 crore) in this single largest turnkey project in the school segment in India, working across 2,005 schools. The company has incidentally been involved in providing school learning solutions in over 663 government schools in the state over the last five years.

Lauded for the developmental work being undertaken since the change of guard in Bihar, particularly during the Kosi floods last year, the

Bihar Government, along with the Maharashtra Government, awarded the contract to NIIT for providing computer and computer aided education to 1.9 mn students in 900 state government schools in the two states. While in Maharashtra, NIIT would be training nearly 1.3 mn students in 500 state government schools, about 6 lakh children in 400 schools in Bihar would be taught in the next five years. As per the contract, the company would provide a network of ten computers and one server in each school, backed by a UPS and a generator to enable continuous power back-up, apart from providing highly trained instructors for classes eight to twelve in secondary and higher secondary government schools for a period of five years.

The Rajasthan Council of Elementary Education (RCEE) too has entered into a Rs 21.4 crore contract with NIIT to introduce CAL in 1,672 government upper primary schools in twenty-two districts of Rajasthan within the framework of Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA). The five-year agreement would involve setting up 1,672 fully furnished modern computer labs with over 5,016 computers, benefiting 33,340 teachers and 8,36,130 students.

The New Delhi Municipal Corporation joined NIIT in providing

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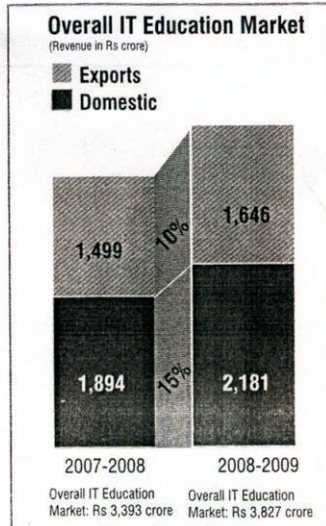


information and communications education in twenty-nine municipal schools, including 11,500 students from classes six to twelve, for a period of one year initially. As per the engagement, NIIT would train teachers and would also set up computer labs inside NDMC and Navyug Schools to offer training on computer science and informatics practices, and offer basic computer education programs for students of classes six to ten. Significantly, with this, NIIT will offer ICT education in more than 9,500 government, municipal and private schools across the country.

Educomp, the other major player in the segment, has also done its homework well. Even as it bagged a work order worth Rs 50.27 crore from the Karnataka Government for implementation of computer aided education in 708 PU colleges in the state over a period of five years; it went ahead and inked a Rs 109 crore deal with the Yedurappa-led Karnataka Government for providing computer aided education in 1,571 schools.

This was followed by bagging a Rs 18.3 crore contract from the Haryana Government, which is taking its first steps in introducing ICT in senior secondary schools. The state government awarded a three-year contract for introducing ICT in over 800 government high schools in twelve districts including Ambala, Bhiwani, Faridabad, Gurgaon, Hissar, Jhajjar, Karnal, Mewat, Panchkula, Panipat, Rohtak, and Sonapat.

Meanwhile, the Uttar Pradesh Government contract worth Rs 120 crore would see Educomp working in 1,401 schools across four zones—Lucknow (372 schools), Meerut (380), Jhansi (369), and Gorakhpur (280). The contract would provide right from hardware and software, one full-time instructor at each school, courseware and training to even electricity and Internet connection at each school. It will also monitor and manage the project during the five-year contract



CyberMedia Research DD Estimates

Unlike IT services or BPOs which are primarily exporting to the US or UK, training reaches far more exotic shores. Vietnam, Mongolia, Ivory Coast, Botswana, Ghana, and Mexico were some of the more popular destinations

period. On the other hand, in Assam, working with the Assom Sarba Siksha Abhijan, (SSA) Mission, Educomp would be involved in imparting training and engagement to teachers in 641 schools.

The Gujarat Government, however, seems to be toeing a different line from the other states as it has awarded a contract to both Educomp and NIIT. While Educomp has bagged a Rs 83.8 crore contract to cover around 8,50,000 students from classes nine to twelve across 1,780 schools in two zones—North Gujarat (905 schools), and Saurashtra & Kutch (875 schools); NIIT would work in 1,870 higher and higher secondary government schools impacting around 9 lakh students under a contract worth Rs 84.3 crore.

Exporting India

First it was China, then Africa, and

now the focus has shifted to Vietnam. Vietnam seems to have found favor with the two training majors—NIIT and Aptech. As Aptech celebrates ten years of operation in Vietnam through its thirty-eight centers, the company has seen significant growth in the last one year. Aptech Vietnam has trained over 40,000 students in subjects like software education, animation, multimedia, and hardware and networking. Last fiscal, N-Power introduced a hardware and networking course by opening two centers. The company is also looking at opening Avalon centers.

Aptech's China operations, meanwhile, was divested and it completed the sale of 50% equity interest in its joint venture. As part of the deal, Aptech got 22% stake in the holding company of the business in China. Besides Vietnam, Aptech is also scouting opportunities at setting up centers in Latin America and French-speaking countries in Africa. It recently signed a JV in Brazil with the Falgo Group. Aptech Brazil would be addressing the retail market with ACCP and other related ICT courses. These programs will be in line with Brazilian University programs. Under the JV, 51% investment will be from Aptech, while the rest will be invested in equal parts by the Brazilian group. While the operations will commence in September, fifty centers would be set up in the next three years.

NIIT meanwhile registered over 45,000 students across foreign centers, opening twenty-four new centers across diverse locations like Iran, Malaysia, MEA, Mexico, Nigeria, Thailand and Vietnam. The training major launched a slew of courses including a new version of their Master Mind Series (MMSv2) in Botswana, Ghana, Mexico and Vietnam; courses from tech majors (Web component developer and Solaris Admin from Sun, Oracle 10g and Oracle 11i Financials; Modular Offering 2007). The NIIT course was also accredited by Nigeria's National Board of Technical Education.

—Stuti Das
stutid@cybermedia.co.in

The Times of India

New Delhi

17 August 2009

TECHNOLOGY SCHOLARSHIPS

The '19th Bhavishya Jyoti Scholarship Test' that provides IT scholarships will be conducted on Sunday, September 13 by NIIT across the country. This 19-year-old annual scholarship programme rewards fee waivers to meritorious students and graduates desirous of building successful careers in diverse industries that require information technology skills. This year NIIT plans to offer the scholarship to students who demonstrate proficiency at the +2 level and a personal interview. The application forms for the test are available at NIIT education centres across the country. Students can also log on to www.niit.com/bjs2009 to get more details. The last date for receipt of application is September 12, 2009.

The Times of India

New Delhi

31 August 2009

AWARDS BAGGED

NIIT has won three awards at the eINDIA 2009 summit under the 'Digital Learning India 2009' award category, for its innovative learning solutions. eINDIA is an ICT event that brings together ICT experts, practitioners, business leaders and stakeholders of the region onto one platform, through keynote addresses, paper presentations, thematic workshops and exhibitions. The nominees were evaluated on the basis of economic cost and sustainability, stakeholder support and other inclusiveness indicators like the impact on livelihoods and society in general.

Mail Today

New Delhi

1 September 2009

NIIT Bhavishya Jyoti test

NIIT will conduct the 19th Bhavishya Jyoti Scholarship Test on September 13 across the country. The 19-year-old annual scholarship programme leads to fee waivers of up to Rs 34,000 to meritorious students. This year, the scholarship will be awarded after an assessment of a student's performance in Class XII followed by a personal interview. The applications forms are available at NIIT education centres. For more, go to www.niit.com/bjs2009.

The Economic Times

New Delhi

21 August 2009



Anil Gupta and Haiyan Wang

FEW PEOPLE IN INDIA ARE aware that Mr. Vijay Thadani, CEO of NIIT, is an officially designated "Economic Consultant" to the city of Chongqing, a metropolitan hub of 30 million people, making it the largest municipality in China. NIIT has nearly 200 training centres in over 65 cities spread across China. The company's presence includes partnerships with over 130 universities where-by, using an "NIIT Inside" model, it embeds course modules into the regular curricula of partner universities. NIIT China works with about 1000 teachers, over 95 percent of whom are Chinese nationals, and trains about 50,000 students per year. By every standard, NIIT has made itself an insider in China.



NIIT's success in China is a vivid illustration of the fact that a much larger number of Indian companies – than is the case at present – could be active players in the China market. As we have noted in earlier columns, China is well on its way to becoming the world's largest economy and thus the world's largest market for many products and services by 2025. Ignoring China is not and will not be a viable option.

Three factors make it easier for a typical B2B company to crack the China market than would be the case for a typical B2C company. First, in most B2B industries, the company has the possibility to leverage its relationships with multinational customers to lubricate entry into China. IBM and Microsoft were some of the first companies that hired NIIT's students in China. This track record played a significant

role in making NIIT a highly desirable training provider for Chinese students. Second, a visible high profile brand name is less critical in B2B markets. This is a major advantage in the early stages since it can take a huge investment of capital and time to build a visible brand name in a large country such as China. Third, while adaptation to local market needs is always necessary, on average, B2B products and services need less customisation than would be the case with B2C products and services.

Notwithstanding the somewhat lower entry barriers in a B2B context, companies are likely to find that China can be a tough market to crack. Since ignoring China is not a viable option, Indian companies have little choice but to be smart, patient, and persistent. We propose six guidelines for developing a smart strategy for the Chinese market.

First, in the early stages, give primacy to building a credible and defensible market position than to maximising profits and cash flow. China is a brutally competitive

ENTER THE Dragon

Anil Gupta & Haiyan Wang provide guidelines to crack the B2B market in China

market and requires long-term commitment. An early focus on profit maximisation will often force the company to forego valuable long-term options and instead pursue non-sustainable short-term strategies. In order to have the financial muscle to take a



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long-term perspective regarding the China market, it is important for the company to maintain a strong profit and cash flow position in today's anchor markets such as the home market of India. In short, long-term success in China very much requires contin-

ued strength in India.

Second, in the early stages, focus on a narrow product-market niche with the aim of getting traction. Ideally, such a niche should be one that builds on your core strengths while also targeting a highly under-

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New Delhi

21 August 2009

served market need. NIIT has had far greater success in China in the training business than in the software development business. The Chinese government is eager to build an IT industry, Chinese students are very eager learners, and the training market has been badly under-served by a university system geared towards imparting theoretical knowledge rather than practical skills. Picking the right beachhead significantly reduces the risk of early failure, allows the company to build a viable local footprint, and to start learning about China. It is unwise to take on too much complexity too soon. Building a defensible position in one segment before moving into an adjacent one is much smarter.

Third, right from the beginning, invest in building partnerships that would give the company visibility and create positive spillovers with other stakeholders such as government entities and customers. NIIT started operations in China via a joint venture with the local government in Pudong, Shanghai. Also, the company chose Tsinghua University (China's number one engineering school) as one of its very first university partners. These early stage relationships helped NIIT significantly in opening the doors to many other market opportunities in China. Similarly, Aptech, which also has been very successful in China, operates there through a joint venture with Beijing University which, like Tsinghua, is one of the most prestigious universities in China. Partnership with Beijing University has given the joint venture ready-built credibility with other stakeholders such as employers and students.

Fourth, be proactive about seeking visibility in the local media. Think about how little Indians know about China. Consider now the possibility that the average Chinese may know just as little about India. The broad-brush image that most Chinese have about India is that of a country which is much poorer than China but has a strong education system, is good in English, and has become an IT and software powerhouse. On average, other than in the IT sector, Indian companies are likely to find that they are viewed as less credible than their American, European, Japanese, or South Korean counterparts. Building visibility in the local media will help the company on many fronts – credibility with potential customers, attractiveness to potential employees, and visibility to poten-

tial partners. NIIT again provides a good example of local media visibility. In 2004, China Information World, a weekly magazine, bestowed the Best Training Organisation Award on NIIT. Such recognition can eliminate many market and political hurdles. Fortunately, for many companies from other industry sectors, the timing is now right. Chinese media, especially business media, have woken up to the fact that India is now consistently the second-fastest growing economy in the world. Thus, there is growing media interest in India and Indian companies.

Fifth, in preparing your Indian staff for assignments in China, give far greater importance to cultivating a deep understanding of China's history, its culture, its economics, and its politics as compared with learning Mandarin. Language skills should be treated as the icing on the cake rather than the cake itself. A foreigner can never be as good in Mandarin as an educated native. Irrespective of your language skills, it would be wise for you to rely on your own professional translators when conducting business negotiations in China. Thus, the primary mistakes that you might make will occur not because of your language deficiencies but because of the fact that you don't understand how people across the table think, their body language, what matters to them, and what's driving them. It is these mistakes that you must try to prevent. Of course, fluency in Mandarin is always a nice add-on. However, its primary value will lie in social rather than business contexts.

Sixth, be eager to learn from the experience of others. The recently established India Business Forum in China brings together seasoned veterans such as J.J. Shrikhande, head of Larsen & Toubro China, Prakash Menon, head of NIIT China and others. Having opened the China doors for their companies and having lived and worked in China for over ten years, their experience and relationships could be of significant value to new entrants. It is better to make unavoidable new mistakes rather than the same old ones that others have made and learned from.

Anil K. Gupta is the Ralph J. Tyser Professor of Strategy at the Smith Business School, The University of Maryland.

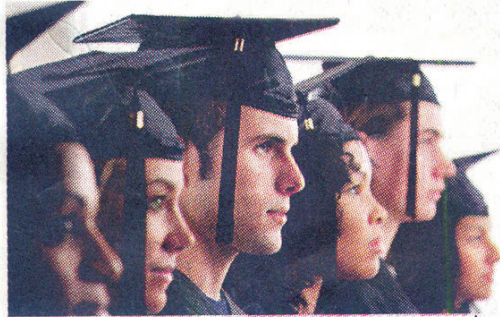
Haiyan Wang is Managing Partner of the China India Institute. They are the co-authors of *Getting China and India Right* and *The Quest for Global Dominance*

The Indian Express

Chennai

24 August 2009

Something bigger to celebrate



NIIT announced the launch of IT Scholarship Program, '19th Bhavishya Jyoti Scholarship Test', which will be conducted on September 13.

The 19-year old Annual Scholarship program rewards fee waivers to meritorious students and graduates who desires to build successful careers in diverse industries that require Information Technology skills. The scholarships will be given to the students based on their performance in class XII and personal interview.

The application forms for the test are available at NIIT education centers across the country. Students can also log on to www.niit.com/bjs2009 to get more details. The last date for receipt of application is September 12, 2009.

With the theme of 'Have Something Bigger to Celebrate', this year's programme will offer Merit based fee waiver of up to Rs 34,000 on NIIT's IT training programs.

G Raghavan, President-Global Learning Solutions, NIIT, said, "Bhavishya Jyoti Scholarship was launched to enable financially challenged meritorious students to pursue a career in IT and add to the nation's trained manpower base. Over the past 18 years the scholarship has been able to help and benefit over 3.2 lac students. We believe our initiative will go a long way in guiding meritorious students into the IT domain".

Students who have completed their Class XIIth or equivalent, those currently pursuing graduation and/or completed graduation in any stream, and Polytechnic diploma holders are eligible for NIIT Bhavishya Jyoti Scholarships.

The DQ Week

New Delhi

24 August 2009

To find out who are India's top channel partners check
 APR 2009 at www.dqweek.com

IT spend in education to grow 19% by 2012

A recent report from Springboard stated that upgrading networking and implementing IT security solutions rank highest on the agenda of most IT decision-makers in Indian education institutes

DQW NEWS BUREAU
 New Delhi, Aug 21

The latest research study by Springboard Research suggests that Indian education sector is likely to step up its IT spending from an estimated \$356 million in 2008 to \$704 million in 2012, reflecting a Compounded Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 19 percent during 2007-2012.

According to Springboard's report titled, 'Inside the Campus: IT in India's Education Sector,' Wireless LAN (WLAN), Storage Area Network (SAN) and ERP are the three most popular IT solutions adopted by education institutes in India. The report also revealed that upgrading networking and basic IT infrastructure and implementing IT security solutions rank highest on the agenda of most IT decision-makers in Indian education institutes.

"Educational institutions in India are presently focused on the deployment of IT systems that will enable them to improve the educational process for their students, and to stay ahead of the competition," said Nilotpal Chakravarti, Senior Research Analyst—Vertical Markets, Springboard Research.

"In particular, a large number of institutions are opting for networking solutions, storage and ERP implementations to support their business, upgrade operations and streamline budgets," he added.

The report also revealed that majority of institutes reported moderate to high IT spending on software (up to 50 percent of their total IT spending). In contrast, 18 per cent of respondents reported spending more than 75 percent of their budgets on hardware. Spending on IT services remains low in the Indian education sector with nearly half of respondents spending up to 25 percent of their budgets on services. When questioned on their future IT investment plans, survey respondents gave

the highest importance to networking, PCs and servers and student administration systems.

"License and subscription fee renewals take up a large piece of spending, while network infrastructure upgrades will enable students and teachers to have more access to quality curriculum-based digital content such as digital learning objects," Chakravarti said.

Springboard also revealed high level of home PC penetration among students in major cities in India with 74 percent of school students and 86 percent of college and higher education students estimated to have access to personal computers at home.

When it came to vendors which are perceived active in the educational segment majority of respondents named Microsoft as a leader in providing educational software and solutions. Other key solution players in the market are IBM, NIIT and Oracle. IBM led the market in servers and storage infrastructure with more than a third of all respondents naming them as their preferred vendor, while HP was ranked as top PC vendor in the education market. D-Link and Cisco were stated as the top two networking vendors.

INSTITUTES SPEND ON:

- 75% of budgets are for hardware
- Moderate to high spending on software
- Spending on IT services remains low

FUTURE SPENDING TRENDS:

- Networking
- PCs
- Servers
- Student administration systems

The Hindu

Chennai

August 31, 2009

E-learning – the challenges ahead

Revolutionising the process of education – that was the big promise it started with. Has e-learning achieved that today? A reality check with experts in the field.

SRUTHI KRISHNAN

Classrooms without teachers, no textbooks, and learning that could happen anytime, anywhere – this was the promise e-learning started with. But how much of that has been achieved? *Education Plus* spoke to experts in the field to understand the current scenario of e-learning in India and what the challenges are in adopting it.

A catch-all phrase that included any form of technology-assisted learning, e-learning was poised to revolutionise the process of education. "After the big bang, people expected the big bang to continue," says Vipul Rastogi, president, Enterprise Solutions (India), NIIT, which offers e-learning solutions, talking about after the initial buzz on e-learning how the journey was expected to be. In place of the big bang, there is a "silent revolution taking place," he says.

The sectors which are entering the field of e-learning serve as a testimony to the growth of e-learning. Telecom, banking, finance, and government are rapidly moving towards e-learning, he says, adding that the primary driver is not just to decrease cost but also to increase reach. Universities are also looking at e-learning modules to supplement their regular curriculum courses.

In this context, it becomes necessary to understand how effective e-learning courses are. Three to



WIDENING REACH: For e-learning to be effective, ensuring that the learning process is right is important. PHOTO: K. RAMESH BABU

five years ago, e-learning was 'good to have', rather than 'must have' in universities and corporate houses, says Rajesh R. Jumani, chief marketing officer, Tata Interactive Systems, which offers e-learning solutions. The focus was on the "look and feel" rather than the learning. "You had fancy things moving about, planes zooming," rather than making sure the learning process was right, which is now changing, he says.

More simulation-based training based on games are being incorporated in e-learning. And a high level of acumen is required to develop such e-learning modules. For instance, a course in finance could be taught by a game where you are the Finance Minister. The decisions you take would impact the economy of a country – a game you would play to understand financial concepts, he says.

"The most difficult question to answer is how effective is a training programme," says Mr. Jumani. Instead of surveys or feedback forms on how good the course was, there

have to be measurable feedback, he adds. For instance, in a corporate house, the feedback could be in terms of whether there was an increase in productivity after going through the course, he says. And for an e-learning programme to work, it is important to first understand whether something is suitable for e-learning or not, he adds.

The audience has to be understood, says Mr. Rastogi. There is a difference between the way a 10+2 student understands a concept versus the way a professional working for 10 years understands it, he says, adding that after understanding the audience, the audio-visual components need to be woven around that. Hence, there are two layers to a successful e-learning programme – the technology component and the learning component.

In India, e-learning courses could be made more popular through availability of broadband connections at competitive rates, regional language-based content for technical subjects, two-way interaction for doubts, and perfor-

mance feedback with students, says S. Giridharan, CEO, EdServ, a education firm. "The real India, the bottom of the pyramid, still lacks education and guidance to a proper career," he says, adding that e-learning could be a solution for employability.

A shift in mindset is required to adopt e-learning, says Mr. Rastogi. It is the same barrier that exists with any adoption to technology. But once that is overcome, e-learning would prove beneficial, he says.

The issue with e-learning being adopted more in universities and government is the classic chicken and hen case – who would pay for developing e-learning content, asks Mr. Jumani.

Private companies would not invest in creating content, unless they knew they would have a market, and universities and the government are reluctant to invest money up front in creating content, he says. And content could not be imported from abroad, as it has to be culturally sensitive to the context, he says.

Livemint.com

3 August, 2009



State govts joining hands with private firms to use technology

New Delhi: Many state governments are in talks with firms such as NIIT Ltd and Teledata Informatics Ltd to forge partnerships to use information and communications technologies, or ICT, in education.

Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Bihar, Orissa, Jharkhand, Punjab and Haryana are looking to the private sector to build, operate, own and transfer (BOOT) ICT infrastructure in government schools.

This would typically require installing computers with educational software, and training teachers to use these technological aids. Educating India: A file photo of a computer class in Shree Sharada Vidyalaya school at Amruth Nagar in Bangalore. The new initiative by some state governments would require installing computers with educational software in educational institutions, and training teachers to use these technological aids. Hemant Mishra / Mint.

The assets created through this process would be transferred to the state governments after five years. The development comes after the ministry of human resource development, which oversees education, asked states to consider the BOOT model to utilize funds worth Rs900 crore for the fiscal year to March to set up e-learning infrastructure in schools and colleges.

The fund sharing arrangement for the scheme stipulates that the Union government would contribute 65% of the money and the states would contribute the remaining 35%. For north-eastern states, the ratio is 90:10.

“We prefer the BOOT model and ideally would want all the states to follow it for the programme,” Anshu Vaish, secretary, school education and literacy, told Mint. “So far, five states have been granted permission to follow the model.” Vaish clarified that the states are also free to partner or launch the scheme on their own.

India’s National Mission on Education through Information and Communications Technology, which has an allocation of Rs4,612 crore to be utilized by March 2012, aims to leverage the potential of ICT. This is expected to be a major intervention in raising enrolment rates in higher education.

L. Balasubramanian, president, school learning solutions at computer education provider NIIT, said the BOOT model in ICT was mutually beneficial. “It’s very simple. We create infrastructure for them and operate it before transferring assets, while government pays us for service development every three months.”

“Ten years ago, the Tamil Nadu government faced long delays in procuring hardware for its IT training programmes in schools and they, too, switched to a BOOT model,” Balasubramanian added.

NIIT currently has a Rs21.4 crore contract with the Rajasthan Council of Elementary Education to introduce computer-aided learning in 1,672 government primary schools in 22 districts of Rajasthan within the framework of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, India’s flagship welfare programme to put every child in school.

The company has also bagged an IT education contract for 2,005 schools from the Andhra Pradesh government, besides two other orders from the Maharashtra and Bihar governments to provide computer training in 900 schools in the next five years.

“Demystification of computer-aided learning is happening, especially in rural areas, as we get on with it,” said Shabnam Sinha, chief executive officer for private-public partnerships at Infrastructure Leasing and Financial Services Ltd (IL&FS). “We are targeting very remote areas under the scheme.”

There are, however, some operational hurdles. “Implementation is very difficult since one is doing at the school level. In many states, it has happened that computers are lying unused. In many cases, computers set up by us in schools have been stolen, especially in states like Bihar, but we have been able to recover them through police action,” said Sinha, whose company is also setting up e-learning infrastructure in 156 schools in Pune, Maharashtra.

While IL&FS is in talks with some north-eastern states for ICT projects, NIIT has already started work with the Assam and Tripura governments.

Balasubramanian said the use of ICT in the north-eastern states has led to developmental gains. “The Assam government did not have the required budget, but then, they have the status of a preferred backward state. ICT training in schools there motivated the youth there, thereby reducing militancy.”

Sinha said that the government’s ICT scheme needs to be treated more as an outcome-oriented programme instead of vendor-driven initiative. “What it requires is enhancing quality of education in schools, which can happen only when it is impacting the attitude of teachers, students and parents towards education,” she said.

To be sure, private firms are not rushing headlong into arrangements with state governments.

“In many cases, (the) budget for the programme was not enough. There were challenges in state government finances. So we choose our states very carefully. It requires political will... to get things going,” said Balasubramaniam.

In a separate but related development, the Union government is also looking to partner with private firms to establish 2,500 model primary schools, a concept Prime Minister Manmohan Singh mentioned in his Independence Day speech in 2007. The details of such a partnership are still to emerge. One such model suggests that state governments would provide land for these schools and the private players would bear the cost of building and infrastructure.

Despite the government’s keenness to encourage private sector participation in the education sector, not everyone is convinced. Private companies have complained about a lack of clarity in the structure of such partnerships with the government.

“The policy arrangement differs from state to state since they are free to do it their own way, which makes (for) large variations in implementation,” said a person familiar with the negotiations, who declined to be named. “In BOOT model, everything is at a very nascent stage, so we need to know it clearly still.”

State govts joining hands with private firms to use technology

The Siege of Africa

21 August, 2009



GAME FOR TECH: NIIT's IT scholarship test in Nigeria attracted enough people to fill a football stadium

The newest frontier for global business. A fusion of tempting opportunity and formidable risk. A China-India battleground. Come, watch the potboiler called Africa. by Neelima Mahajan-Bansal, Sanjay Suri | Aug 21, 2009

Prejudice dies hard. In 1972, Manubhai Madhvani was arrested in Uganda for being of Indian origin and jailed in a dungeon nicknamed the “Singapore Block”. Dictator Idi Amin snatched all his wealth and expelled him from the country. To this day, the 79-year-old businessman counts himself lucky for not having been killed then.

It is events like this — and the all-too-familiar images of disease, poverty and squalor — that have shaped the stereotype of Africa in the minds of Indians. Somehow, we may have been a bit late to note when the continent began to change for the better. In fact, Madhvani returned to Uganda in 1985 and rebuilt his family business in sugar and hospitality to a \$200 million empire. Uganda, and many other African countries, reformed their economies and opened up to foreign investment.

But before we responded to the new Africa, someone else did. In a well-planned and executed strategy, China has been thrusting itself in all spheres of economic activity in the continent. The Chinese “invasion” of Africa is veritably the biggest state-run investment in the last decade. They are everywhere. State-run Chinese firms are building bridges, roads, telecom networks, airports, and generally boosting the infrastructure all around. In return, they are getting access to natural resources. China is now Africa’s biggest trading partner, ahead of the US. More than a million Chinese workers are now based there. After the European colonists left Africa, the Chinese have been dubbed the “neo-colonists”.

But recently, a new picture is emerging in our image of Africa. And happily, its tone is Indian. Unlike China’s push driven by its government, the Indian march to Africa has been led by the private sector. After proving themselves in fields as varied as automobiles, telecom and education in recent years, Indian businesses are gradually upping the ante. Big ticket investments and acquisitions are emerging. In other words, Africa has become the new frontier for Indian companies to break into.

Steadily, the profile and the scale of Indian investments in Africa is going up. In early August, the Essar group bought a refinery in Mombasa, Kenya. Essar is no stranger there. Its \$450 million investment in the country’s mobile telephony market is yielding results — Essar’s brand ‘Yu’ has 400,000 subscribers.

There’s considerable excitement around Bharti group’s on-going talks for a merger with MTN, Africa’s biggest telecom company, which could create the world’s third largest telecom company. **NIIT has grown to be one of the continent’s biggest firms in information technology training, having taught 150,000 students across 55 centres.**

The Tata group, the Mahindras and Ashok Leyland have been selling vehicles for more than five years now with increasing success. Indica cars are a common sight in Johannesburg. Sales have moved up from 5,000 to 20,000 a year. Consumer products company Marico is already in Egypt and South Africa through a carefully orchestrated strategy of buying out local hair care brands. This is just a snapshot of the 42-odd frontline firms from India that have answered the call to Africa.

Why Africa: What have all these companies sensed in the form of the African opportunity? When asked why Africa, Raman Dhawan, managing director of Tata Africa Holdings, asks why not. “We are expecting Africa to grow substantially over the next two decades. We are here like any other international company. We are no different from the rest of the world. They are looking at growth here, so why shouldn’t we? If you can be a good international company, you will find growth in Africa.”

After decades of living on the fringes when the West dominated and Asia rose, the African continent is finally coming on its own. “Since the early 1990s, African countries went through serious structural reforms, improvement of economic management, incentives to develop the private sector, important changes in governance legislation in doing business,” says Jose

Indian Inc Explores Africa

21 August, 2009

What does NIIT, Tata, Apollo Tyres and Dr Reddy's have in common? Their prolonged interest and success in Africa by Neelima Mahajan-Bansal, Sanjay Suri | Aug 21, 2009



G Raghavan, President,
NIIT Global Individual
Learning Solutions

Instead of fretting over crowded markets in Europe and Asia, a few companies (Apollo, NIIT, Tata Steel, and Skipper Energy to name a few) looked at Africa. These companies had to do a lot of unlearning, think differently about business models, work with the governments and the local community and wait patiently to get back in the black.

Today, these pioneers are success stories in Africa. Here, the executives of these companies talk about strategy, formulas and market savvy targets.

NIIT

When NIIT decided to set up a training centre in Botswana, they were venturing into uncharted territory. No Indian training company had ventured into Africa. Today the bet paid off and NIIT has established centres in eight African countries. NIIT has trained nearly 150,000 students since it began operations in 1997. G Raghavan, President, NIIT Global Individual Learning Solutions speaks of the company's experience

NIIT's Entry Strategy

As a continent, Africa has got opportunities for Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) capacity building. That requires human capital and we can add value and create capacity to the nation we are present in. That would help build services-based economic growth in the country. In these countries, human asset is really big. IT training would help

add to employment and fruitfully engaging vocations. In some countries, IT training renders people mobile. They can be employable in other countries as well.



Continental Formulas

We realised that we would be in it for the long haul. We did not expect dramatic results. We knew we need to go country by country. The North of Africa is very different from the West which is different from the Central which is different from the South. This is in terms of natural resources, political stability, and economic stability. We realised we have to win country by country and there is no continental formula

When we evaluated each country, we looked at parameters like:

- Youth coming out of high school where we see ICT having a reasonably favourable position in the country. The youth were open to moving to another place for a job.
- Academic orientation of the country and policies encouraging skills training organisations like ours. Botswana has a Tertiary Education Council which is an accrediting body — they had a mechanism to include non-formal players like us.
- A country that was hungry to move towards a services-based economy and eager to absorb skills in ICT area.
- The size of the opportunity matters too. Botswana is a very small country. But when you superimpose factors like government focus, government funding in education, the size of the opportunity is actually huge and it all turns out to be very favourable.

Local Partners Make Sense

We work in all these countries with partners so that we have more access points — somebody who has been in the country, knows the job and skills requirements and also knows the students' capabilities. The partner helps you understand the landscape in granularity. Our partner in Botswana is an Indian couple who have been very well entrenched in the country for 30 years. Their job was to get the physical centre up and to get the local government's permission. Our job was curriculum, design, course content, training teachers, technology and branding.

On Expansion

We will expand first in South Africa and then West African countries. We will increase the product depth where we are all already present. We would like to double the number of our centres in Africa and also the number of students in three years. We are there for the long haul. The business has been profitable. We have a long journey to go in terms of product breadth and expansion. Africa in terms of opportunity is quite comparable to China and India.

What Does It Take to do Business in Africa

Across Africa there are differences in the state of economy, economic development and mineral resources. There are variations with regard to the presence of academic institutions. In some countries, the government is proactive in getting skilled people to move up. Others are passive. We need to keep all those things in mind. Eventually, we want to be everywhere. We need to work with governments and private institutions alike.

While doing business in Africa, patience is an important. Sometimes the results will not pay off till a while. For the first four years, the number of students we had was very small. It took a while for Botswana's Tertiary Education Council to recognise us. It takes a little long time to build a solid footprint on the ground. We have taken a long time to get there. When we looked at the numbers in the first four years, we could have said let's pack up and go.

It's important to know how the education system works, what kinds of students are available, what the paying capabilities of the students are like.

Synergy with the Country

You must align your objectives with the objectives of the government. You must aim for synergy. I have found progressive governments that are playing a role in bringing education forward like the Kwazulu-Natal province in South Africa, or Botswana. South Africa has been active in formulating an ICT strategy for the country. There are many progressive governments out there who want to engage with private and foreign players to improve availability of trained talent.

Hiccups Along the Way

Money remittances from African countries to India can be very bureaucratic. So, sometimes it takes very long for money transfer to happen. For remittances, we take in the fact that there will be delay. We live with the process. You need to factor in these challenges into your equations. You take a decision on whether or not to go in there now or later. If your business is low-margin and cannot take this cycle time in remittances, then you must not enter that country. Sometimes the terrain is not easy to travel on or safe. Some of the markets are tough personally. In Lagos and Johannesburg particularly, people have to be careful. You can't freely move around like in places in India.

Teaching talent availability has not been a show stopper for us. We always train local talent — whether it is in China, Vietnam or Africa. Our own curriculum is well standardized that we'll be able to train faculty fairly quickly. We invest in training of faculty.

<http://business.in.com/article/magazine-extra/exploring-africa/3562/1>

Daily Mirror Financial Times

August 27, 2009



NIIT partners with Virtusa introducing “Enterprise Java Specialist” program

NIIT together with Virtusa Corporation (NASDAQ: VRTU), announced the launch of an enterprise Java specialist program, “Head Start to Virtusa through NIIT”, in order to enhance the quality of Java educational experience in Sri Lanka on par with industry standards.

The MoU was signed by Madu Ratnayake, General Manager Virtusa Corporation, Sri Lanka, and Subramaniam Muralidharen, COO, MMBL CyberSkills (Pvt) Ltd., NIIT’s business partner in Sri Lanka. This partnership will provide state-of-the-industry education and expertise to the students.

Madu Ratnayake, said “The partnership will build industry-academia relationship and provide students a platform for gearing up to the challenges of the corporate world. Virtusa provides opportunities for graduates to work at the organization and enjoy the benefits of working in a professional and growth-oriented environment.

The objective of the program is to build capacity by creating an industry-ready Java talent pool that will be ready for the enterprises which would help the industry to reward with the Java education system. “Head Start to Virtusa with NIIT” will provide a foundation to IT graduates for their career as Java professionals. The program is industry application oriented and consists of the technologies used by enterprises coupled with an internship. The course duration will be three months followed by a three months internship at Virtusa Corporation. This is a great opportunity for students as they obtain the theory and the practical aspects in one program.

Subramaniam Muralidharen, COO MMBL CyberSkills (Pvt) Ltd., speaking about the partnership said, “NIIT, based on its deep understanding and expertise in IT training is pleased to be associated with Virtusa a global IT company enriched by its unique delivery methodology. We will continue to be involved in developing the curriculum to build talented Java professionals in accord to global trends and innovation facilitating to the needs of the industry”.

World Chess Champion Inspires Botswana



Mosah Mokganele, Correspondent: Former president Festus Mogae encouraged 40 chess players beaten by the world champion Viswanathan Anand on Saturday to pride themselves in having the chance to play the best man in the game. Mogae said it is a rare opportunity to play a champion.

Mogae was officiating at an event where the Indian Grand Master (GM) beat 40 players in Gaborone in simultaneous games. "Never mind that he beat you. He did that to everyone he played before. Be proud that you have played and lost to a world champion," Mogae told a cheering crowd.

The former president who was in his element kept the crowd laughing and said Botswana journalists have had the opportunity to report about the world's best chessman.

"Shakespeare said some people are born great, others achieve great things and others have greatness cast upon them and that is us today," he said.

After beating the 40 players, Anand told Monitor Sport that most of them showed a lot of potential and with proper development, Botswana can go a long way in chess. He said the players showed a lot of enthusiasm. Anand was in the country courtesy of NIIT and Botswana Chess Federation (BCF). He said through NIIT, he is prepared to help Botswana chess grow. He added that there are lessons that Botswana can learn from his country as India plays high-level chess. Anand said his visit is the beginning of good things for Botswana and India in chess. He was grateful for the warm welcome he got in Botswana.

He said the lesson that he will take home is that Botswana are a relaxed people.

BCF president, Tshepo Sitale said they will forever remain grateful for Anand's visit. He added that chess in Botswana has shown a lot of potential and with proper investment, it can grow to greater heights. He said BCF hopes to roll-out chess to all parts of the country in the near future. Anand was expected to play 30 players in simultaneous games yesterday.

<http://www.mmegi.bw/index.php?sid=8&aid=31&dir=2009/August/Monday31>

World Champion Viswanathan Anand in Botswana

August: 31.08.2009



Vishy and Aruna Anand arriving at the VIP lounge of Gaborone International Airport

Whenever Sheela Raja Ram looks out of her office window in Gaborone she sees students playing chess during class breaks. This made the Botswana managing director of the Indian technology company NIIT decide to bring over their spokesperson on a goodwill tour. Vishy Anand received a warm welcome, especially since he is the first World Champion to visit the country.

Report by Kenneth Boikhutswane

The reigning World Chess Champion, Grandmaster (GM) Viswanathan Anand of India, touched down last week in Botswana, and was afforded the welcome befitting of a player of his status. For instance he was allowed to use the VIP lounge of the Gaborone International Airport.



"You are most welcome!" The president of Botswana Chess Federation Tshepo Sitale shakes hands with the champion.

Present to welcome him at the airport where Botswana Chess Federation president Tshepo Sitale, NIIT Botswana Managing Director Sheela Raja Ram, Ravindra Nath who is the Acting Indian High Commissioner in Botswana, Masego Ramakgate of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as chess lovers and members of the press. This visit is a result of the partnership between NIIT Botswana and BCF and the hope is that Botswana will in the not so distant future have a similar version of the Mind Champions Academy which Anand started in India.



Aruna Anand chats with the Managing Director of NIIT Botswana, Sheela Raja Ram

GM Anand visit to Botswana represents the first time a World Chess Champion has visited this country, and as such is a historic moment for BCF and Botswana, as well as the African continent. I have searched, and have not found, any information about any Champion visiting this vast continent. Therefore, this visit reaffirms the well-known fact that the current champion is a modest gentleman, who will do anything possible to promote the game of chess at any opportune moment. While here Anand is set to engage in two simultaneous displays, one against students of NIIT, private tertiary institutions, BCF primary school students, as well as a few invited guests. The second simul, hopefully to prove a little tougher than the first, will see him take on the cream of Botswana chess in the national team. Amongst those set to play him are the likes of three times Botswana champion Phemelo Khetho, the current Botswana champion Providence Oatlotse, Woman Grandmaster Tuduetso Sabure, Woman FIDE Master Boikhutso Mudongo, Ignatius Njobvu and Gorata Leso, who has just come back from Norway, will also be expected to give the champion a run for his money.



Anand, ambassador for NIIT and the Mind Champions Academy project



A group photo with the World Chess Champion

Straight from the airport, Vishy Anand was whisked off to the Grand Palm Hotel and International Conference Centre. He did not have much time to rest, as NIIT had arranged a dinner for him same evening. Recalling how the trip was made possible, the MD of NIIT Botswana, Raja Ram said it all started “with a one line email to NIIT India!” According to Sheela everytime she looks out of her office window she sees plenty of students playing chess during their class breaks, and this very act by the student reinforced her conviction to bring over the Champion. Raja Ram also mentioned that she was ”committing, in front of everyone present, that NIIT and Botswana Chess Federation’s relationship will go a long way.” A thunderous applause followed that statement.



Anand meeting chess fans outside the airport, with national team player Tshepiso Lopang on his left. The building on the background is the airport being prepared for the Football World Cup in South Africa in 2010



Vishy and Aruna arrive at the dinner hosted for them by NIIT



The BCF team at the dinner – your writer is the man with dreadlocks!



NIIT Botswana MD Sheela Raja Ram addressing guests at the dinner

The moment that everyone one had been waiting for, a speech by the GM Anand, finally arrived. As the champion walked to the podium, the whole hall stood up in a massive show of respect for a man whose title is undisputed, following his tournament and match win, thus ensuring the world has only one champion.



Respect! The whole hall stands up as the champion walks to the podium



I am speaking from the bottom of my heart, the champion seems to be saying in his address



The hall is packed, and everyone listens attentively to the World Champion

The champion noted that he had always wanted to visit Botswana, and has been warmly received. In his speech he mentioned that in chess one always has to come up with a new plan for every game, as what has been played will be studied by opponents and therefore will be of no use in future. As for his Mind Champions Academy project, GM Anand noted that “studies showed lower levels of delinquency in kids taking up the game of chess, and the game also improved academic performance” and was happy that BCF was planning on a similar initiative



The Anands with the BCF team that worked hard to make sure his stay is enjoyable



In a rare gesture, the champion went around all the tables in the hall and shook hands with everyone, an act that left a lasting impression on all those in attendance.

Booster Galesekegwe (left), whose camera lens brought you all these pictures. Booster is a freelance photographer who has covered many international events in Botswana.

Kenneth Boikhutswane, the author of this report, is Botswana Chess Federation Secretary General, and has written extensively on chess for Mmegi newspaper.

<http://www.chessbase.com/newsdetail.asp?newsid=5727>



Produced by NIIT Limited, Corporate, Communications and Marketing Service Organisation
85, Sector 32 Institutional, Gurgaon 122 001 Ph: +91 (124) 4293000 Fax: +91 (124) 4293333