

Role of start-ups in the skill development of school children, with special reference to Indian homemade toys

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Abstract - ‘Startup India,’ a flagship initiative of the Government of India, is intended to build a strong ecosystem for nurturing innovation and startups in the country. According to government of India, it will drive sustainable economic growth and generate large scale employment opportunities. ‘Indian Homemade Toys (IHT),’ with ‘make your own toys’ as its motto, is one such startup founded by two school children from Kerala. The mission of its founders is to inspire Indian children to become technology innovators. India loses roughly around \$ 2 billion on toy imports annually and most of these toys are made from recycled plastic, even including hospital waste. Indian Homemade Toys could be a possible solution. If India really needs to achieve the objectives of ‘Skill India,’ a massive collaboration between children, public, government, financial institutions, industry, academics and educational institutions etc. is most needed. If toy-making is introduced to 200 million school children as an additional creative activity, they can learn and acquire a lot of skills by doing. IHT puts forward a new concept of entrepreneurship: ‘Smart-ups’ or ‘integrated startups.’

keywords - Startup India, Indian Homemade Toys (IHT), innovation, Skill India, Smart-ups, integrated startups

INTRODUCTION

Small businesses are the economic backbone of every nation. With the presence of more than 4,200 startups, India has become the third largest startup base worldwide. Now-a-days, ‘startups’ are often misunderstood with small businesses. Webster’s dictionary defines ‘startup’ as a fledgling business enterprise. Popular definition of a ‘startup’ is ‘a temporary organization designed to search for a repeatable and scalable business model.’ The crucial objective of the startup owner is to disrupt the existing market with his innovative product/service and that of a small business owner is to secure a comfortable place in the local market. In order to differentiate both, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry released a notification to define ‘startups’ on April 17, 2015. According to the government notification, an entity will be identified as a startup till up to five years from the date of incorporation. If its turnover does not exceed 250 million rupees in the last five financial years. It is working towards innovation, development, deployment, and commercialization of new products, processes, or services driven by technology or intellectual property. Startup companies are of prime importance in the knowledge based economy as the main driving force behind them is innovations. Commercialized innovations/inventions provide newer jobs as well as economic growth. They are most influential among the young generation of every nation as they promote research based innovation. Startup culture helps to unleash the creativity of individuals in our society.

Inventions and innovations are highly connected with the skills of individuals behind every start up. Play is a natural activity for every child. If we consider ‘play’ as his/her work, then toys are his tools which make his work easier. Skill development begins at an early age. If the child is capable of making his/her own toys, naturally he/she would be in possession of good imagination, problem-solving, planning and creative skills. If we can create such skillful children, definitely they can contribute to the present startup drive in India. We have selected ‘Indian Homemade Toys (IHT),’ a startup owned by two school kids, for the case study because it aims at the overall skill development of school children in India. IHT is the only startup which represented 200 million Indian school children during the launch of ‘Startup India, Standup India’ on 16/1/2016 at New Delhi [1]. As per the findings of the ‘State of the Urban Youth, India 2012: Employment, Livelihoods, Skills,’ a report published by IRIS Knowledge Foundation in collaboration with UN-HABITAT, India is set to become the world’s youngest country with 64 per cent of its population in the working age group by 2020 EARNST & YOUNG, FICCI Skill Report September 2012[2],

India has gradually evolved as a knowledge-based economy due to the abundance of capable, flexible and qualified human capital. Still, there is a shortage of skilled manpower to address the increasing demands of the global economy. India has the largest group of people below thirty five years of age and the skill development of such working population is a high priority of Government of India. As per Institute of Applied Manpower research, Planning Commission, Government of India, 2010, India has among the lowest proportion of trained youth in the world[3]. Though there are many industrial training institutes (ITIs), vocational schools, polytechnics and professional colleges, sector-specific skill development, training for self-

employment and other forms of training, around 90% of employment in India is in the informal sector where employees are working in comparatively low productivity jobs. So, skill development should begin from schools in order to cater the human capital needs of India. To be very precise, skill development of children should begin from homes. School children, in possession of good imagination, problem-solving, planning and creative skills, can contribute the development of India. Startup India is a flagship initiative of the Government of India, intended to build a strong eco-system for nurturing innovation and Startups in the country that will drive sustainable economic growth and generate large scale employment opportunities. To promote Startups, innovation and design, Government of India announced 'Startup India' action plan on 16/1/2016

2. Methodology of study

The current study is based on the data gathered from the primary sources (Interaction with the CEO Master Amarjiti Premji (10) and CTO Master Abhijit Premji (13) of Indian Homemade Toys and secondary sources like annual report, Startup India action plan released by Government of India, and various kinds of documents available in the internet[4]. Analysis of the data and conclusions drawn shows the importance of indigenous toy components/ toys manufacturing industry in the skill development of Indian school children.

2.1 Toy market: the present scenario in India

New market research report "Toys Market in India 2015-2020" the Indian Toy Industry is expected to grow at CAGR of 20% and be valued at INR 248.83 billion by the year 2020. The main reason for this growth is the population hike. China produces two thirds of the toys in the world. As on 2016, India loses roughly around \$ 2 billion on toy imports annually. Again, most of these toys are made from recycled plastic, even including hospital waste. A wide range of toys and children's products sold in India contain either lead, arsenic, cadmium, mercury, antimony, or chromium. The ingestion of high levels of lead can cause brain, liver, kidney, nerve, and stomach damage as well as anemia, comas, convulsions, and even death. Free flow of cheap Chinese toys accessed the Indian market with versatile features has almost killed the traditional toy industries in India. Though there are international regulations related with anti-dumping, countries like China and Italy are finding new methods to dump their toys in India.

2.2 Indian homemade toys (IHT): a possible alternative

"If we have to promote the development of our country, then our mission has to be Skill Development and Skilled India." This is the vision of Shri Narendra Modi, honorable Prime Minister of India. Through 'Skill India', he dreams of an India having 400 million skilled Indian youth by 2022 and out of this, 200 million are school students. Skill development acts as an instrument to improve the overall effectiveness and empowers an individual to work more efficiently, resulting in a more productive national economy[5]. Globalization has opened newer opportunities to the world. With the increasing use of gadgets like smart phones, laptops, tablets, the number of children who are addicted to virtual games has increased to alarming rates in India. School children as well as elders enjoy playing with graphical games rather than opting for creative activities. These games are time engaging as well as having direct behavioral impacts on children. Undoubtedly, virtual games promote animosity among children. This lazy culture of the new generation is detrimental to the intellectual as well as economic growth of every nation. In-order to convert the child more innovative and competitive, he/she must develop various newer skills. No student in the history of education is exactly like the ones who are a part of our Net Generation. Managing these techno-savvy digital students is tough assignment for every teacher. They want to be challenged and inspired every moment in their learning process. Twenty first century students need 21st Century skills and the most important among them are a) Collaboration and teamwork b) Creativity, imagination c) Critical thinking d) Problem solving.

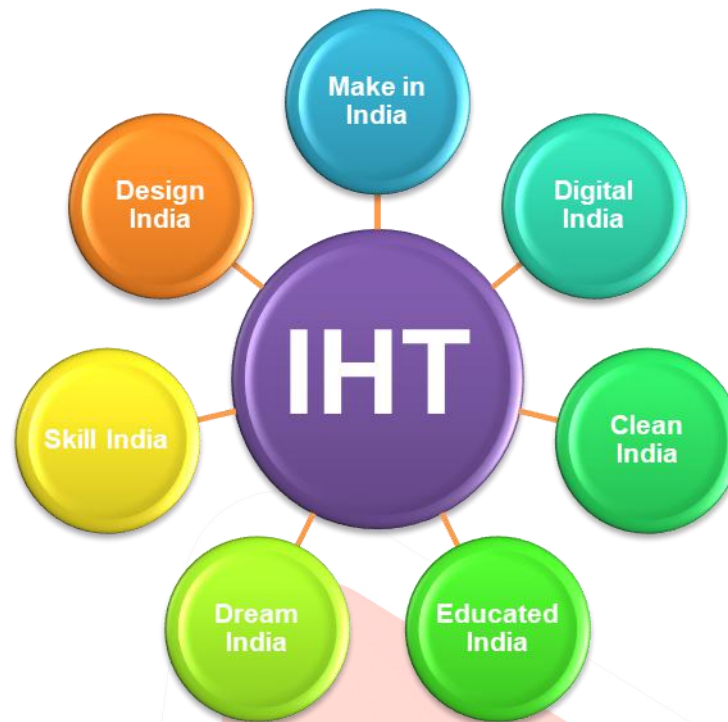
'Indian Homemade Toys (IHT),' with 'make your own toys' as its motto, is one such startup founded by two school children from Kerala. The mission of its founders is to inspire Indian children to become technology innovators [4]. If India really needs to achieve the objectives of 'Skill India,' a massive collaboration between children, public, government, financial institutions, industry, academics and educational institutions etc. is most needed. If toy-making is introduced to 200 million school children as an additional creative activity, they can learn and acquire a lot of skills by doing.. Indian homemade toys dreams of creating immense educational toy components so that Indian school children could secure many skills. Integration of school-based, work-based learning atmosphere can do wonders in skill development of children. If we could introduce home-based, work based learning in collaboration with parents also, the results would be much better. Through component based toy building, teachers and parents can easily identify the skill of a child at an early age. This sort of identification can help in selecting sector-specific skill development in future.

2.3 Business opportunity of IHT as a Startup

Unavailability of cost-effective components used in toy-making, RC - electronic circuits, wheels, small gear boxes, pulleys, and connectors for toy motors, cheap solar panels and many more - is the business opportunity before IHT. IHT would like to design, manufacture and market child-friendly toy components through a cluster of startups functioning under it. Children can create and learn a lot through these unique components. India has more than 650 districts. If each district has one toy component making 'start-up' or 'stand-up', India can save at least a minimum of 5000 crores on imports every year. IHT even hope to find market for the creations of children across India. Thus IHT can become the largest national integration organization in India to create finest startup owners of the future. If India really needs to achieve the objectives of 'Skill India', a massive collaboration between children, public, government, financial institutions, industry, academics and educational institutions etc. is most needed. IHT can clearly serve this purpose resulting in the formation of at least a 1000 startups under

it. IHT puts forward a new concept of entrepreneurship: 'Smart-ups' or 'integrated startups.' Educational institutions can support IHT with innovative toy component designs.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS



3.1 Even a toy matters in Make in India

'Make in India' is a national program designed to transform India into a global manufacturing hub with key focus on attracting investment by physical infrastructure creation, foster innovation, IPR and enhancing skill development. In-order to achieve the key objectives, Indian school children has to be connected with Make in India. Fortunately, homemade toys connect children to 'Make in India.' India loses roughly around \$ 2 billion on toy imports annually. Again, most of these toys are made from recycled plastic, even including hospital waste. Indian Homemade Toys is a possible solution to fight this menace. If educational institutions and parents provide their children with various components of toys, they can create their own toys. Every child is an innovator by birth and today's toymaker can be tomorrow's technology-maker. Thus toys connect children to Skill India and Make in Indian. Homemade toys connect children to higher order thinking skills and problem solving. It gives the provision to dream high. Ultimately IHT connects children to Dream India and Design India. Toy construction based on scientific facts can make the child least stressed during the school life. IHT can teach students how to make homemade toys from trash and he/she can be introduced to 'Clean India' initiative of Government of India. Children can easily learn the importance of segregation of waste generation, which is key element in national integration.

3.2 IHT connect children to Digital India

'Digital India' is an initiative launched by the Government of India on 1st July 2015 for ensuring Government services made available to citizens electronically by improving online infrastructure and by increasing Internet connectivity.[5]. It is having three major components a) creation of digital infrastructure b) delivering services digitally c) digital literacy among Indians. Raspberry Pi and Arduino were both originally designed to be teaching tools, which is why they have become so popular both devices are very easy to learn to use. Toys made with such components can help to improve the levels of innovative spirit among children. They can learn coding and many computer languages.

3.3 Transform India through 'Smart-ups'

'Smart-up' is a quite new concept in the developmental phase of any nation. Like the concept of an Integrated Chip, a 'smart-up' is an integrated startup when a group of startups, standups and many small businesses are clustered to a common theme or mission, prominent in the national point of view. A smart-up has the scope of business beyond a brand. It's actually a blend of global and Gandhian economics. It involves both mass production as well as production by the masses, generating numerous job opportunities.

IHT is a smart up having a national mission: 'Every child in India can have his/her own start-up in future.' Toy-making is fun and kids may learn a lot through fun. Electric circuits, motors powertrains, pulleys, belts, wheels, solar panels, magnetism and so on. Children don't need any special skills to begin with. Kids can make several innovations. IHT is a smart-up having a national mission: '200 million skilled school children by 2025'.

4. Start up: The present scenario in India.

In early 2019, the Government of India defined a startup as an entity that has been in operation for up to 10 years instead of the previous seven years from its date of incorporation. It had also raised the turnover cap for startups to Rs 100 crore from Rs 25 crore. As of November 2019, there are 25,115 recognised startups in India. Startup India has organised mentorship programs in collaboration with government organisations, incubation centres, and educational institutions. Indian government-backed Startup India initiative, which was set up to help startups get funding in early-stage, has released around Rs 700 crore of its Rs 10,000 crore corpus since its inception three years ago. Ministry of Corporate Affairs has notified Startups as 'Fast track firms' which allows them faster exit within 90 days against 180 days for other companies

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