

The science behind start-ups

How Gandhinagar-based Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India is taking steps to catapult entrepreneurship training to a higher level

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NEVER IN ITS 34 years of existence has the Gandhinagar-based Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India (EDII) found its rightful place in the sun quite so fittingly as it has over the past couple of years, with the Narendra Modi government's clarion call of Start-up India and Make-in-India underlining the inherent importance of grooming entrepreneurship to create long-term assets and employment.

Little wonder, then, that there's a palpable air of new-found energy and excitement at EDII's sprawling brick-lined campus milling with students keen to contribute to India's new growth story.

Avers EDII's director of over 20 years, Sunil Shukla, "Certainly, the start-up buzz has helped us enormously and students from across the country as well as abroad are showing significantly more interest in us than a decade ago. Moreover, the recent government initiatives support this concept."

In keeping with the changing times, EDII has taken steps to ensure that it not only retains its relevance as the only institute of its kind in the country, but also morphs into a trailblazer for several new initiatives that would catapult entrepreneurship training to the next level. "The objective," Shukla says, "is to arrive at a tactical approach where our core competencies could be harnessed to keep pace with the external environment."

For starters, EDII has recently launched the technology business incubator—the Centre for Advancing and Launching Enterprises (CrAdLE)—supported by the government's Department of Science and Technology to give a push to the start-up drive in the fields of food processing, healthcare, renewable energy and manufacturing. The move, according to Shukla, will boost the phenomenon of new enterprise creation especially among young entrepreneurs.

He elaborates that CrAdLE is aimed at assisting companies in the early stages of de-



velopment and, to the extent possible, lighten the burden of running a business, thus developing technology and network. "Towards this end, it will provide support in the context of business planning and milestone tracking, legal advice, deal structuring, finance and accounting support, and seed funds for milestone-specific projects."

Apart from this, the institute has commenced EDII Launchpad—a novel and successful initiative that provides young student entrepreneurs opportunities to acquire entrepreneurial experience, replete with the pressures and demands that are associated with an early-stage start-up. "This programme," Shukla says, "is pragmatic, concrete and experiential, as it provides the just-in-time knowledge student entrepreneurs need to access and develop their ideas and plans for a new enterprise."

Over the years, EDII has helped create thousands of entrepreneurs. A study conducted almost two decades ago under the guidance of Prof David C McClelland—a reputed American behavioural scientist—in the three countries of India, Malawi and Ecuador concluded that an entrepreneur may possess certain competencies, and at the same time it is possible to develop these through training, experience and guidance. Following it in letter and spirit, EDII is today sought out by governments across the globe

to help replicate the model it has developed. "The concept of a start-up is not a new one," Shukla maintains. "What we have to understand is that starting-up is not about executing a plan. A start-up is a temporary organisation that exists to search for a scalable and repeatable business model."

A major draw for EDII over the recent past is its hugely popular and unique two-year PGDM in Business Entrepreneurship, which offers a milestone-based learning model that enables a student to build a new enterprise step-by-step even as she pursues the programme. "Milestone-based learning enables students to get practical exposure of every minute step, right from ideating and preparing a business plan, to forming and registering a new company and then running the enterprise," Shukla elucidates.

Of the 427 students who have passed the programme since its inception in 2008-10, 337 have either started their own enterprises or have added value to their family businesses. Yet another programme launched in 2011 that is creating a buzz is the Biotechnopreneur Programme, supported by the Gujarat State Biotechnology Mission. It has created 14 biotechnopreneurs since inception. This 10-month, custom-tailored course exclusively for students and professionals in the field of biotechnology, pharmaceuticals and biomedicine inte-

grates practical as well as academic knowledge with hands-on industrial exposure. Says Prof Bipin Shah who is spearheading the initiative, "The programme, through a combination of multidisciplinary curricula and unique pedagogy, aims to contribute to sustainable development by providing support to biotechnology businesses."

At EDII, training modules have been routinely upgraded in tune with the changing times. Not only that, the institute has, over the years, helped set up 12 state-level exclusive entrepreneurship development centres and institutes. What is noteworthy is that EDII has, in the past six years, imparted training to over 16,500 women entrepreneurs across India. Shukla says that EDII offers effective market-driven solutions to women entrepreneurs to help them build their capabilities and compete better. "Participation of women is close to 23% at EDII, which is significant."

EDII has also earned accolades for its efforts to develop entrepreneurship by sharing resources and organising training programmes in several countries. It has set up entrepreneurship development centres in Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam, and is in the process of setting up similar centres in Uzbekistan and five African countries. A feather in its already festooned cap is a tie-up announced a month ago with the Human Resource Development Fund of Malaysia, through which EDII will assist Malaysia in its target of ensuring 35% skilled Malaysian workforce by 2020.

Exults a visibly elated Shukla, "Our biggest contribution is the fact that our alumni are mostly in the manufacturing sector and are therefore creating tangible assets and employment generation. Our vision is to create at least 50-60 world-class entrepreneurs over the next five years in our incubation centre CrAdLE. Even if each provides employment to 100 people, we would have generated 5,000 jobs."

Also on the cards are plans to introduce more courses. "The government announces setting up of several IIMs in a financial year. But establishment of management institutions alone is not sufficient. Unless we have entrepreneurs, employment opportunities won't be created. Who will absorb all these management graduates? That is why we feel there is an urgent need for more entrepreneurship-oriented courses or campuses of entrepreneurship development," he says.



The government is setting up new IIMs. But is that enough? Unless we have entrepreneurs, employment opportunities won't be created. Who will absorb all these management graduates? That is why we need more entrepreneurship-oriented courses or campuses to teach entrepreneurship.
—Sunil Shukla, director, EDII, Gandhinagar