

**Agenda for Government** | HUMAN RESOURCES

HR leaders across sectors say that our education system needs a complete overhaul right from the school level. Here is their wish list for the new government

by Merril Diniz

**M**ukund Menon, Regional HR Leader – International Paper, observes, “Today we have a lot of educated people, but lack true talent and competency. This is the biggest challenge in HR.” Companies are inundated with résumés from job applicants, who boast of degrees but have little domain understanding, let alone, soft skills and an analytical bent of mind. Even graduates from the top engineering institutes in the country undergo a rigorous training of three to six months before being ready for the work arena.

**Top HR challenges**

Employability appears to be the top challenge across the board. “Employability depends on real-life education, which is practical and fiercely analytical. But we face analytical questions only in important competitive exams like JEE; these kinds of questions are mostly absent in the school or college-level education,” observes Debasis Chatterji, CEO, Netxcell Limited.

Another setback is the lack of superior vocational training. “Our craftsmanship is much inferior to global standards. If we want to make India a manufacturing hub, we need to generate quality manpower in the form of fitters, carpenters, plumbers etc, and deliver quality produce,” says Debasis. Managing the expectations of Gen Y and attrition, leadership development and gender diversity, are the other challenges.

**Need for collaboration**

According to Shekhar Sanyal, Director and Country Head, The Institution of Engineering and Technology (The IET), several organizations are working on employability at varying levels. Bringing them on the same page, could be the harbinger of change. “The Government must take concrete steps to get all government agencies, whether it is the

National Skills Development Council, higher Education Council or UGC, as well as the CIIs, the NASSCOMs and the IETs, which are doing their bit, to connect and work in tandem, to avoid inter-operational issues,” he suggests.

**The curriculum must evolve**

“Universities should also modify the syllabus keeping in view the new market trends and rapidly changing technologies,” shares Nitya Nivali, Director - HR, Progress Software. Rajesh Sehgal, Senior VP and Head Talent Management, Cyient, recommends an expiry date of five years for the Indian education curriculum. “Industry must be involved in co-creating the new syllabus. From Class 11 onwards, courses should



# HR CHALLENGE A SYSTEM OVERHAUL

have a mandated internship programme, either with an NGO or within private sector. And we should lay more emphasis on practical learning and life skills and promote creativity and innovativeness early on,” he says.

**Involve the industry**

PSN Murthy, Sr. VP and Head-HR, with pharma company Granules India is a strong advocate of incentivising the participation of industry in developing courses that will enable students to be industry-ready. Going a step further Rajesh feels that corporate leaders be a part of UGC, Education Boards and AICTE, at the state and central level.

**Change must begin in schools**

Debasis wonders, “How will a



**Shekhar Sanyal**  
Director & Country Head,  
The Institution of  
Engineering and  
Technology

I would like the examination pattern to move towards how you can apply knowledge to solve a problem, or create something workable with it. Also, application focus of the knowledge through practical projects. Both these relate to how the curriculum and exams are designed



**PSN Murthy**  
Senior VP and Head-HR  
Granules India



- Evolve a Skills Qualification Framework in consultation with various industry sectors
- Mandate various sectors to set up new establishments far away from district headquarters, ensuring that opportunities of employment for the rural folks arise right near their place of stay
- Promote job guarantee schemes to ensure employability, compulsory education and training on various sets of skills
- Encourage the institutes engaged in skill development initiatives by providing funding, subsidizing, tax exemptions etc.,
- Draw up a charter with all the state governments to create new jobs at a very healthy growth rate
- Focus on infrastructure development, creation of direct/indirect jobs
- Provide impetus to "Learn and Earn" programmes in collaboration with industries as a part of skill development Initiative

# ES DEMAND RHAUL

**Thampy Kurian**  
Head-Human Resource,  
Federal Bank



Creation of economic growth and promoting entrepreneurship is the only way we can create employment opportunities. **The Government must create a favourable ecosystem where budding entrepreneurs have access to finance and help them pursue their dreams**

developing brain grow if we don't give them an opportunity for free thinking? Tiny minds are overloaded with facts through mugging, and there is no enjoyment in studies!" A practical and realistic syllabus is the solution, he feels, and that learning by rote must be discouraged. Debasis strongly appeals to the new government to increase school-teachers' salaries substantially, along with the basic facilities. "To improve the standard of teaching we need quality faculty. And quality is only possible when we get reasonably good minds to join the teaching profession," he shares. Going a step further, Charoo Aggarwal, MD of Grass Roots India, a global performance agency adds that the Government should invest more resources in teacher education and development.

## Overhaul in vocational training

Several HR Heads stressed the urgent need to improve the quality of training at vocational training institutes across the nation, so as to help India become a manufacturing hub, and compete with neighbours like China. However, this would require the government to invest in building infrastructure for vocational training, industrial training institutes and technical diploma colleges.

## Our focus needs to shift

Thampy Kurian, the Head-Human Resource of Federal Bank articulates our misguided approach to education rather well. "The educational system in India is presently more academic-oriented rather than giving strength to the individual to face challenges of day-to-day life. It is said that people possess different types of intelligence. However, we are inclined to create more doctors and engineers rather than develop people based on their core competency," he observes. "Ultimately, the goal of our education must be to understand this competency possessed by the individual and develop him according to his orientation," he rounds up.