

Chapter 53

Knowledge Management and Capacity Building in Higher Education Holds Key to the Development of a Nation

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ABSTRACT

There are many indicators of the health of a nation and that includes the quality of life and gross domestic product. However, the development can happen only through systematic creation and absorption of knowledge in a society which requires imparting quality education. The development of a nation depends on the human development index (HDI) of the people of the nation. The HDI is primarily dependent on the education and health of the citizen. While basic education which is offered compulsorily provides the foundation of the quality workforce engaged in productive work for creation of wealth for the nation but imparting newer knowledge offers competitive advantage over others. Better knowledge is thus essential to produce superior quality goods and services at lesser costs in a sustainable manner which provides competitive advantage in global trade and commerce and serves as the key driver to the development of a nation. Managing knowledge therefore, holds the key. Capacity building on the other hand, enables the society to accomplish a specific task and activity in a desired manner and hence it really required dissemination of knowledge through continuous training and re-training. Capacity building helps in maximising the social impact in terms of implementation of any new knowledge for common good of the society and also for the nation at large. Capacity building therefore, has to be undertaken with all seriousness as it is normally required to do for project, program and portfolio management. In this article an attempt has been made to discuss the key components of knowledge management as a task and how that help in the development process of a nation, a society and a region. The paper also discusses the impact of capacity building in higher education for the development of the society and how capacity building should be attempted in a specific area of higher learning for maximising the social impact.

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INTRODUCTION

Technology development cycle has reduced considerably because much faster pace of technology development impacting the product life cycle significantly making products life cycle shorter and shorter putting demand on corporations to reduce new product development time drastically to ensure survival and growth. A decade ago it used to take seven to eight years to develop a new model of a car. Today automobile manufacturers are churning out new designs almost every alternate year and that too with improved efficiency and functionality as well as improved performance (Rajat Baisya 2010). Technology is growing that fast that existing product and services soon become obsolete. Large businesses are struggling to survive. Existing product has to be replaced by new product and corporations have to put in resources to put product development effort on faster track. Japanese companies have highest number of research and development scientists in the organisation. In Japanese companies we can see also R&D people occupying key positions in the company which is not the case in India and also in many other countries. Japanese follow a three track development process, namely, cost reduction in existing products to make it more competitive, improve functionality in the existing product to make them versatile and better than competition and finally a genuine innovation which is a complete new product. With same R&D effort three track development will help Japanese companies to have three new products including a genuine innovation (Rajat Baisya 2010) almost at the same time of development effort.

Andrew Grove, CEO of Intel and the author of 'Only the Paranoid Survive' also a brilliant technologist and manager who helped build Intel Corporation into one of the world's most important technology companies realised the early signal about the dangers of complacency (Andrew Grove 1997) and practiced what he preached, forcing Intel to abandon its heritage as a maker of memory chips when –in the face of Japanese competition, which was much cheaper and Intel could not compete, Intel was losing market share. This was identified by the author as the inflection point which is ten times greater than the forces affecting the businesses. These forces could be forces of competition, change in the technology, change in the power of customers, change in the power of suppliers and complimentors, change that is due to the imposition of or the removal of regulations as given in Porter model of five forces (Michael Porter 1985)– all these can lead to a strategic inflection point forcing businesses to radically do different things failing which their existence will be threatened. Intel under such situation with the leadership of Andy Grove moved to microprocessors that saved it from bankruptcy and led to decades of prosperity. "Sooner or later, something fundamental in your business world will change" he wrote. "What such a transition does to a business is profound". He also said that "Business success contains the seed of its own destruction. The more successful you are the more they want a chunk of your business and then another chunk and then another until there is nothing left" (Grove 1997).

In today's competition only few survive adjusting constantly with the change in environment. The first mover in any category benefits from the larger market opportunity and follower will get only the residual opportunity. It is therefore, imperative on all businesses to manage knowledge better than the competition as it is this knowledge that will help them to sustain their business in the longer run. Through products and services businesses have to deliver higher value for their customers in relation to their own competitive set. And that requires better and more efficient management of knowledge and that task has become all the more difficult when technology is changing that fast forcing businesses to either adjust or just perish.

According to an analysis by Arthur D. Little, if the launching time of a new product exceeds by 10 per cent in a two year development cycle, revenue loss amounts to 25-30 per cent, whereas if product

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