

I.I.I. SUCCESS STORY FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK (U.K.)

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THE BACKGROUND

The Engineering and particularly manufacturing industry in U.K. had become synonymous with inefficiency, obsolescence, decline, complacency and poor industrial relations; so much so that the British Press described this situation as "British Disease". There was a visible division between the elite institutes of higher learning and the industry. So much so that, they seldom talked with each other, let alone working together. Manufacturers considered universities to be out of touch with the reality, university based research to be commercially irrelevant and the graduates to have no real understanding of the world of work. On the other hand, academics were seen to be only interested in adding to the collections of pure research papers, the criteria upon which promotions were given and never bothered about taking up problems faced by the industry. This was the situation in U.K. upto the beginning of the 1970s'.

NEW INITIATIVES

In the latter part of 1970s, it was strongly realized and recognised that the only way to achieve long term success of the U.K. economy was to create manufacturing capability fully backed and supported by the engineering edu-

cation system with close working relationship and common aims.

Rather a sort of partnership was seen as the need of the day and not merely liasson nor merely interaction. Accordingly, a number of initiatives were introduced to improve technical education and training, and to stimulate and improve industry-institute links. Of all these one very important initiative was the U.K. Teaching Company Scheme which encouraged company based research and development programmes supported by industry and university staff. It is regarded by many in U.K. as the most successful Government funded industry related initiatives ever introduced and remains well supported and effective even today.

MANUFACTURING GROUP OF THE WARWICK UNIVERSITY

The University of Warwick was one of the few universities set up in these days specifically to forge close relationship with local industry. Being new and with no in built prejudices, this University was well placed to react positively to the new initiatives and to take up the collaborative concept in all aspects between the university and the industry.

A manufacturing group was formed

in 1980 under the leadership of Prof. S. K. Bhattacharya and with close collaboration of three major U.K. industries-Rolls Royce, Lucas Industry and The Rover Group (then British Leyland). Thus, starting in a small way, the group has now expanded with over 300 partner companies spread over the entire globe and with approximately 4000 participants on its post-graduates and post-experience programmes, annually. Partnership at Warwick are full and effective collaboration from which both the industry and the university and the participants as well derive ample benefits. This is the secret of the Warwick success-story.

To Warwick, "Partnership" means full involvement of industry in the design, development, delivery and monitoring of its programmes. In training terms this means, the setting of strategic directions, the contents of the courses and specific contents of each module; the style of delivery and mode of attendance, the review of module on a regular basis and shared delivery. It is this letter and spirit of "partnership" which ensures success of the programmes undertaken by the Warwick manufacturing group.

The effectiveness of the programme is indicated by the number of partners generated worldwide, the size of the training programmes (with over 1000 M. Sc. students enrolling every year) and the demand of these programmes over-

seas, particularly in this Asia-Pacific Region. The group has now major centres in HongKong, Malaysia, Thailand, China and India as well as in six cities in Europe.

CONCLUSION

We, in India, have realized the necessity of Industry Institution Interaction, or let me say Partnership. Institutions have been talking of I I I for the more than five years on various platforms. The response from Industry has been from nothing to something. A top level MoU are signed between top industrial organization and top educational institutes. But what happens to these later one, is not known. It is time that we pursue these efforts at all levels - National, Regional, State, District and to even local levels. The efforts are to be made at all levels and on a continuing basis. Probably, the Warwick Story of U.K. has a definite lesson for us.

References :

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