

INDUSTRY INSTITUTION INTERACTION - - THE TATA STEEL EXPERIENCE

INTRODUCTION :

Tata Steel, as one of the India's foremost integrated steel plants, has introduced a number of pioneering steps in the course of its eight decade long existence. Most of these "steps" have been quite significant in terms of their impact on the industrial climate of India in general, and the approaches to the management of industries in particular.

One of the momentous events in the history of Tata Steel, concerns the conscious adoption, in the early 1920's, of a policy aimed at the systematic development of knowledge, skills and competence in people. As a consequence of this policy, and the company's formal orientation towards enhancing the skills and the knowledge levels of all those who would, directly and indirectly, be affecting the performance of the plant, Tata Steel set up the Jamshedpur Technical Institute (JTI) in November 1921. The institute is now known as the Shavak Nanavati Technical Institute (SNTI), in memory of Mr. Shavak Nanvati, who was an alumnus of the institute, and rose to become the Managing Director of Tata Steel.

Over the 75 years since the

founding of the Jamshedpur Technical Institute, Tata Steel has systematically fostered a high degree of interaction with academic institutions, both within India and abroad. The many stalwarts who were responsible for guiding the evolution of Technical Training within Tata Steel were conscious that if the Steel company were to upgrade the quality of its people, it would have to do so in conjunction with the various academic institutions in the country. This was all the more essential, because at the heart of the plan to set up a Technical training Institute, was the courageous stand of the founder who insisted that Indians must learn to think for themselves, and not depend upon experts from abroad. Infact, as a direct result of setting up the erstwhile JTI, the Steel company was able to move away from the situation of having on its rolls over 250 foreign technicians in the early 1920's, to almost none in the late 1960's. Further impetus towards a closer association between Tata Steel and academia was provided by the recommendations put forth by Sir M. Visvesvarayya and Sir Rajendra Nath Mukharji, two eminent Indians who had

a deep understanding of both industry and academia.

Today Tata Steel through the interface provided by SNTI, is actively engaged in a variety of ways in providing a fillip to industry - institution - interaction. Apart from the fact that large numbers of professionals from Tata Steel interact directly with academia as experts, an equally large number of professional is involved with the myriad policy forming bodies in HRD, Technical Education and the like, of the government as well as of NGO's. Specifically, the Shavak Nanavati Technical Institute is today involved in stimulating greater interaction with institutions through the means enunciated in the following sections.

EXAMPLES OF THE INTERACTION TATA STEEL HAS WITH ACADEMIA

Industry - Institute - Interaction is the reflection of a basic belief, that industry and academic institutions working together alone can stimulate the adoption of beneficial changes in society. This belief has always been at the core of Tata Steel's orientation in developing people, and this is further manifest in the specific actions described herein :

Organising Training Programmes for faculty of Engineering Colleges :

Tata Steel has been conducting short-duration programmes for professional / Lecturers of Engineering Colleges in various areas, with the assistance of the Indian Society of Technical Education (ISTE). these programmes have enhanced the ability of the professor / Lecturers from

academia to train their students better, especially in plant equipment and processes.

Collaborative Projects with Various Institutes :

Tata Steel has been using expertise from various institutes such as IIT - Kharagpur, IIT - Kanpur, RIT - Jamshedpur, IISC - Banagalore, and many other colleges of higher learning, for conducting live projects inside the plant. The Steel Company has also been providing expertise to many such Institutions. The projects are usually collaborative in nature which enable the experts from industry as well as students and faculty from academia, to interact and gain mutually from an exchange of views.

The areas covered so far have included Production, Operations Management, Computers, Industrial Management, Technology Management and a variety of areas related to Steel Processing and Metallurgy.

Training of Students and Faculty :

The company regularly organizes summer placement for students and the faculty of Engineering Colleges / Management Institutes from all over the country, at its works in Jamshedpur. This provides a good opportunity to students and their faculty guides to have comprehensive understanding of what it is like within a modern integrated Steel Plant. This is over and above the involvement that is encouraged, of M-Tech students, as well as MCA students, in live projects that are completed in periods ranging from 4 to 6 months at a time.

Faculty Visits :

Tata Steel often takes Technical Personnel from academic institutions to work on application oriented projects for short spans of time. This provides educators a tremendous exposure to the processes and the technologies in vogue in modern industries, and results in the associated academic institutions gaining substantially in the process.

Practice School Project with BITS. Pilani :

Tata Steel is one of the Practice School II Centre for BITS - Pilani. Since 1995, the company has been taking a number of students of the final year to work on six - month long projects. Such projects are of importance to the process in the plant. The feedback from the students and the organisation have been positive so far.

R & D Expertise Exchange :

The Research and Development Team of Tata Steel has also been interacting with eminent professors / experts from Academic Institutions both in India and abroad. The regular exchange of professional from academia serves to enrich the already capable bank of R & D experts within Tata Steel. **Sponsoring Higher Education in the Field of Metallurgy in University of Sheffield (U.K.) :**

Tata Steel has an agreement with the university of sheffield (UK) whereby outstanding metallurgists working in the plant are sponsored for higher education in U.K. This exposes experienced professionals from industry to the latest changes in areas of Steel making and steel metallurgy, and enables a continuous upgradation of expertise.

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