Student Leadership Skill:
A Sustainability Paradigm to Harness the Demographic Dividend in India*

Malathy Iyer
Associate Professor, Vivek College of Commerce, India

Abstract

The need of the hour is a progressive model in education for all learners in India. India has reached the stage to reap demographic dividend. The focus of this case study is on building a creative innovation model for learners in the age structure of 0-14 who are the future human capital of the country. This case study has been conducted based on the knowledge model, on the role of mentors who improve the life skills of students. Talent and skills can be optimized through education to make the most out of economic potential and best prepare the workforce for better employability. We need to rethink our skill bundles and maximize learning skills using a different approach, bring a revolutionary change and reform in education pattern which will improve occupational skills in a way that encourages reform and changes the life skills of the youth.

1. Introduction

The key to any country's demographic dividend lies in its population. The lack of skills and employment shortages project it as a demographic debt to the country. If India has to cash its demographic dividend, there should be a target strategy to focus on the development of our human capital. More than half of India's population is younger than the age of 25 and the entry of this group into the working population over the next few decades is expected to spur India's economic growth. There are adequate signals that in the past, many nations saw stages of increased productivity and savings during periods in which they reaped demographic dividend.

India can encash its demographic dividend with its large youth population since it has the opportunity to position itself as a skilled manpower base. Developing human resource as an investment is one of the most important national agendas for India. Skills and knowledge are the driving force to get employment in any economy. The education imparted at the graduate level is neither market-oriented nor skill-based. In the event of such dynamics in work and employment, individuals now look for more flexible learning opportunities that offer multiple skills for personal mobility across various industry segments and geographic locations. The Indian education system has been unable to provide these opportunities. It is essential for India to focus on vocational education and training; India has been ranked number 105 globally, on the worldwide Human Capital Index, which measures a nation's ability to foster, develop and deploy talent for future economic growth. The share of the working age population will continue to rise until 2040. There are five hundred million

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people in the Indian labor force. Over ninety percent of them work in informal sector gaining traditional knowledge on the job. Lack of proper vocational education for large sections of the population leads to poor working conditions, low income levels and workers; disinterest hindering economic progress. Lack of skills and training can be attributed to shortage of a formal vocational education framework, with wide variation in quality, high school dropout rates, scarce skills training capacity and negative insight toward skills development and lack of "industry-ready" skills, even in professional courses. The key indicators of HCI 2016 show shifts in the ethnic composition of the workforce will continue which can be encashed. Currently, 46.7% of the population is below 25, which is growing. India also ranks (121st) poorly on workforce participation with the largest employment gender gaps.

The target group that needs to be addressed is the tertiary education students before they choose their area of study. We need to recognize and be aware of more flexible and learning opportunities that offer multiple skills. We need to realize that it is the availability of employment which is going to make the learners choose a stream to study. Traditional education which is the base for natural growth and developed skill base will be a boon for our youth. The inability of our youth to put into practice what they have learnt serves as a catalyst for questioning the crux of the education system. India's tertiary enrolment rate is poor at 23.99% and the vocational enrolment rate stands at a very low 2.72%. Skill range among the university graduates is 67.49 and it indicates a strong specialization in a limited number of academic subjects. The study observes that there is a steady decline from primary education enrolment to secondary education and tertiary (Higher Education) levels. The degree of unemployment is due to students not voluntarily engaging in employment. India needs to develop its core capabilities in achieving lifelong learning skills.

The onus therefore lies on all the stakeholders, the government, educators to see that all the learners are empowered to take the opportunity of skill and training for employability. The initiatives of the government need to be massive to bring an inclusive development and there needs to be pervasive initiatives by private entities through collaborations and independent works.

This study concentrates on the vital indicators and the first age group. 0-14 years are the first age structure of the population for whom education is one of the most crucial factors. Student leadership program is the most valuable co-curricular activity that will develop their skills though there are no passing criteria and no credits to earn, the knowledge gained from this learning takes the children forward which will be valuable for a life time. A learner who will be a frontrunner is taking up this learning environment that encourages hands-on experience. Planning skills, decision making skills, communicating skills, and working as a team will build human capital. With confidence and experience I can say these portable leadership skills cannot be learnt when the kids are studying for an exam or sitting in a class.

As a learner, the teenager learns life skills and will be in the inimitable position to make a difference in his life. They are taught to think big and to use their voice from a place of influence. Think about it, right now you can put into action changes that will impact the entire community and improve the country of which you are a part.

To fulfil the dream of encashing the demographic dividend takes teamwork, tough work, and time from each person. It is important to utilize your time, your team, and your talent

efficiently. There is a thirst for seeking answers to the questions: What can we do to achieve demographic dividend? What should we contribute? How can we be more productive?

In answer to these questions the Indian Development Foundation (IDF) decided to launch the Student Leadership Programme (SLP) in 2014 targeting children of 14 years of age after a detailed study so that the training and mentorship will put the learners on the right track. Since time is valued by all the stakeholders, it is important to work on increasing particular presentations thereby saving the amount of effort and time spent unproductively by the group. Inspiration and a preparedness to contribute to society are crucial for youth, who form a majority of the population. This skill has to be spread to the whole nation. Nevertheless, there is much more to leading a successful student program. Accomplishment is about harnessing talents and learning to work smarter, and excel in communication skills. In this paper, you will find many valuable insights on how mentoring is done by various sections of the society to make a student a frontrunner across the sections of the society. A system whereby people from different areas of an organization work together as a team and have strategic vision to drive change, innovation; a highly-integrated approach broadens the understanding of fundamental operations and best practices, and deepens the confidence to lead high-performing teams world-wide and cross-functional initiatives. With a broader grasp of management, the mentors from different sections of the society too will return to the organizations ready to identify problems, formulate solutions, and adapt to global market changes.

2. Case Narrative: The SLP Model

SLP model is the brainchild of Dr. Narayan, CEO of Indian Development Foundation (IDF). Inspiration and a preparedness to contribute to society are crucial for youth, who form a majority of the population. Looking into the low employability rate of degree holders in the country we had the idea of developing the skills and leadership development program for the youth. Going deeper into the discussion we came to the conclusion that the target for employability should start at school level. The decision to target the eighth standard children emerged with the feeling that until seventh the child undergoes natural growth and by the time they finish schooling they decide their path. So, we came to the decision that the children of class eighth are at crossroads of deciding the path of knowledge. There is a need for holistic development of the learner so this student leadership program will help children to develop life skills.

IDF started their Student Leadership Programme (SLP) —training leadership skills among students in different schools in Mumbai. Students were mostly drawn from aided/ unaided/ municipal schools. The programs were run at 15 different focus areas in Mumbai conducting 100 programs successfully. There were 18 programs that were conducted in Malvani which is an area for the underprivileged and the second highest of 9 which was at Kandivali.

The Hyderabad SLP started in 2015 and already 8 programs have been conducted successfully. The programs have been started in Pune and Jaipur and are in process of becoming a growing trend.

Learners are the driving force for innovation and growth. The number of learners has grown from 50 in 2013 to 2222 in 2016.

The SLP Model is a sequence of workshops designed to provide additional skills to formal academic school curricula. Over the years, different school programs other than the main core curriculum have been implemented where learners can be warehoused "until they have learned the skill required for future career", while IDF runs different programs for children across Mumbai and caters to all the children who join the program voluntarily. We believe that these students are given an additional skill and leadership training personalized to the unique needs of each learner and their behavioral pattern increases the chances of his/her success. The SLP model helps students learn self-confidence and develop a sense of self. They experience success which makes them more receptive to the instruction, counseling, mentoring, career and other opportunities being offered to them. Community service and success in employment become an opportunity for a better way of life for these students.

Our organization feels that it is critical that these students extend their knowledge beyond the classroom. It is during the co-curricular or performing service that students can best learn the lessons of responsibility and learn integrity and soft skills. Our experience says that the students have been deficient in these areas which has been proven time and again. The Human Capital report of 2016 says that children below the age of 14 in India do not have vocational skills, the indicator of which fares as low as 2.72%. A student cannot reach his/her potential unless they have been shown the possibilities. Our mentors evalute the student's interests, discuss with the student what skills can be tapped to develop vocation which help the student discover what is required to obtain those jobs, and map out an academic and vocational strategy to fulfill their dream.

SLP is designed to complement the children's confidence with skills so that the youth are filled with options for adult living. Students will work with mentors from different backgrounds, utilizing computer-assisted instruction, to master the skills necessary to meet the academic standards. This program will help to bridge the transition from a disconnected life to a meaningful life through completion of SLP at the age of 14 and the exposure will give them the confidence to choose career options, post-secondary training, and work opportunities.

We believe that all learners will learn under proper conditions. Our mission is to help these students get a boost so that they can go back with confidence to their school much more prepared to deal with the academic opportunities and behavioral skills of the society as a whole.

SLP has designed this program to see that the skills learned will make the dropout rates among students negligible. Our program intervenes at the time when students need credit accumulation and confidence to decide their stream for graduating from traditional high school and make an informed decision before reaching the age for attending college.

IDF has set up weekend sessions in schools and in locations within their school premises at easily accessible venues. We have blended a curriculum that inspires learning and a team that understands the challenges of working with disconnected, unmotivated students too. We have found that learners respond to our SLP with a new-found sense of purpose, gaining not only high school education, but also confidence. When compared to a traditional high school setting, our program offers key advantages, such as a highly dedicated and experienced mentor team, strategic community partnership and an emphasis on social responsibility.

3. Sessions in the SLP Program

The SLP program has been designed to develop skills in the learners. It is a 24-hour power packed program for 12 weeks, with two hour sessions on Saturdays. There is no financial implication on any student who joins this program. It is voluntary in nature taking into account the parents' permission for their child to join the program.

Every session has an alpha mind meditation for ten minutes, a recap of what was done in the earlier session and the students' playtime at home is also discussed. Students are given a goal book so that they can record what they do in their sessions.

3.1. Session 1 Time Management

Time management is a very important skill for life. Only with proper time management can a child actually achieve all the goals he has set for himself.

The mentors help students form teams and mentor each other by making sure the team manage their time efficiently and on the last session of each day, everyone has to present the achievement of their peers in front of the class.

3.2. Session 2 Public Speaking

Session two focuses on public speaking and makes them aware that participating without fear is the only way to remove fear of public speaking. To remove fear, they are shown audio visual aids.

Table 1: Parameters of Public Speaking

1. Eye Contact	5. Make people laugh
2. Hand Gestures	6. Do not use notes
3. Smile	7. Keep it short
4. Voice modulation	

Mentors' experiences are that initially most of the learners find it a little difficult but eventually everyone will be able to speak when called upon. Mentors keep in mind the 7 parameters listed above and guide students to speak using them by giving them feedback for improvement in areas that they are weak in every time when they come forward to speak.

3.3. Session 3 Anger

Mentors give examples on anger and how to manage it. They show learners by performing skits based on different reasons as to why people get angry and how they are able to solve it by learning to manage anger. The outcome is that the learners come up with a solution to manage anger.

3.4. Session 4 Personal Hygiene and Well-being

The children are made to examine their daily activities relating to personal hygiene. The importance of 4 magic phrases—I am sorry, please forgive me, I love you, thank you—is also emphasized. A video on truth versus lies is shown to insist the importance of values and the long-term goal of it is to show that only with truth you can succeed in the long run.

3.5. Session 5 Good Company and Bad Company

The students are shown a good company-bad company movie for about 30 minutes and then a discussion is held. Learners are given the task of going to their school and promoting hygiene among their friends. A presentation is done by kids on any topic they have learnt in the last 5 sessions through role play, song, dialogue, narration etc.

3.6. Session 6 Leader

The Mentor explains to the students that each one of us is a Leader in some way or the other and that this quality is hidden within each one of us and all of us need to 'Awaken the Leader within Us!' We can do this by developing Leadership qualities that lie dormant. Once this is discussed with the students a group activity is conducted. Children write the 5 qualities they would like to acquire to become a leader. When the groups have written they are asked to read out their responses out loud and the mentor writes each of the points on the blackboard for the class to see and on repeated points the mentor adds stars against them so we get an overall idea about which points students feel are most important. The mentor also makes a note of this group activity in their books in detail highlighting the statistics of each leadership quality so we get to understand the students' understanding about leadership. Then the mentor shows the slide with the qualities of a leader and explains. All the activities conducted in these classes are to develop leadership qualities.

3.7. Session 7 Confidence

The never give up attitude videos of champions who face obstacles and have fought harder are shown to learners. For e.g. Michael Phelps (Swimming) – 8 gold medal winner, Olympics 2008, took to drugs. Michael Schumacher (Formula 1) – 7 times world champion, announced Retirement. Michael Jordon (Basketball) – 6 times NBA championship, Lost NBA final. Roger Federer (Tennis) – 16 slam titles, lost Australian Open. Derek Redmond (Athletics) – 3 major World Championship golds, got knocked out in 400 m race. What they learn is the winners also face obstacles but never lose hope! They fight even harder. If they can do it, why can't you?

3.8. Session 8 Fear and Courage

A 30 minute movie on courage is shown and discussed and a game is held for understanding leadership, time management and goal-setting. The aspects of fear are discussed and each group is provided with a worksheet on fear. The learner is given the opportunity to speak about fear. The following is a list of some fears that are discussed.

1. Examination fear
2. Stage fear
3. Fear of Parent/Teacher/Subject
4. Fear of Heights
5. Fear of speaking the truth
6. Fear of Public Speaking
7. Fear of Darkness

8. Fear of public image
9. Fear of falling/drowning/hurting oneself
10. Fear of loneliness.

3.9. Session 9 Goal and Career Building

A video is shown and a game is conducted to help the learner understand time management so that he feels motivated to set his own goal. The relationship between time management and setting a goal is discussed. The main aim of the mentor is to make the learner choose a career they are passionate about. The mentor makes an attempt to ask the learner about vocational and entrepreneurial options and make them aware of newer options.

3.10. Session 10 Quiz

A gaming quiz session is arranged where information on India is given.

3.11. Session 11 Money Consciousness

This session is organised to make the young learners conscious of money and its value. The learners are made aware of the importance of the medium of exchange in the form of currency and bank notes to purchase and sell various commodities and services which support our living. They are asked to debate on questions such as, What is money? Is money the most vital entity in our life? If yes, why? If not, why? Ultimately, the fact that money is not the most significant thing in life is stressed. Money cannot buy love and happiness which rank the highest in terms of human well-being. Both are not things which have a price tag or can be bought. We feel these even without money. However, money is required for us to live a comfortable life. Money should not make us greedy.

HOW CAN WE SAVE MONEY?

- Even one rupee saved everyday can be of great value during hard times. Now ask kids some ideas on how they can save money they get.
- Saving the money the child gets for travel by walking to their destination if it is not too far.
- Saving any money they get to eat outside by opting to avoid junk food.

HOW SHOULD WE INVEST MONEY SO IT GROWS?

- All the money you SAVE should be INVESTED so that it GROWS.
- Have a bank account—save it in a bank and earn INTEREST.
- Invest it in mutual funds and get DIVIDENDS where it can grow in the long term.
- Invest in a small property and earn RENT, if you have large savings
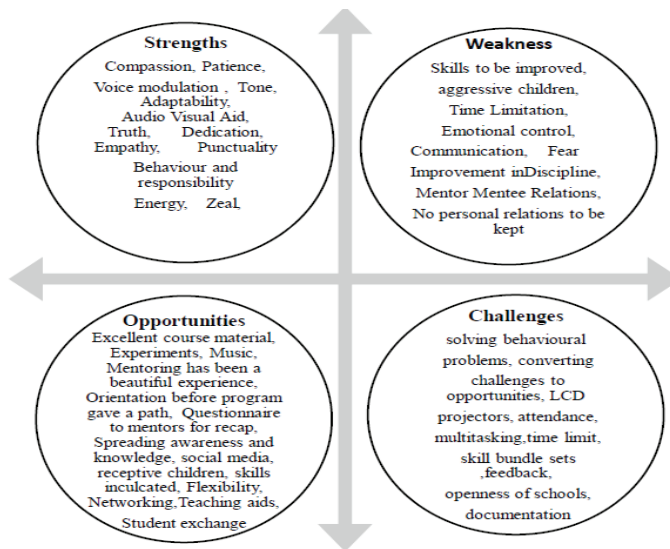
3.12. Session 12 Finale

Parents are invited at the finale and the event is managed by children and the mentors are at backstage giving the strength for them to manage the event. It is ensured that learners are not only conducting the entire show, their public speaking skills also get highlighted.

4. SWOC Analysis

A SWOC (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Challenges) analysis is a simple and effective way of examining your own mentoring capacity and helps you to classify zones for improvement. It is a way of assessment which helps to discover mentoring exercise in detail and highlights areas which are frequently not noticeable. Consider each of the following stimuli and complete each of the quadrants in the SWOC analysis below. Use the results of the *Measuring Mentoring Potential* valuation to identify strengths and opportunities for development.

Figure 1: SWOC of the Mentors from SLP

Strengths
Compassion, Patience, Voice modulation , Tone, Adaptability, Audio Visual Aid, Truth, Dedication, Empathy, Punctuality Behaviour and responsibility Energy, Zeal,

Weakness
Skills to be improved, aggressive children, Time Limitation, Emotional control, Communication, Fear Improvement inDiscipline, Mentor Mentee Relations, No personal relations to be kept

Opportunities
Excellent course material, Experiments, Music, Mentoring has been a beautiful experience, Orientation before program gave a path, Questionnaire to mentors for recap, Spreading awareness and knowledge, social media, receptive children, skills inculcated, Flexibility, Networking,Teaching aids, Student exchange

Challenges
solving behavioural problems, converting challenges to opportunities, LCD projectors, attendance, multitasking,time limit, skill bundle sets ,feedback, openness of schools, documentation

Mentoring often activates an educational setting with an associate student who is further along in the same program. Mentorships are planned to offer direction to those who have expressed an interest. Mentor combinations are done on a consistent basis. A mentor-mentee blend requires work, assurance, and follow-through mutually if it has to succeed.

The mentors have communicated the abilities that define them:

1. It goes without a slogan that as a mentor, it is essential to communicate elaborate details in a way that makes sense and that your mentee can understand and learn from them.

2. Being a mentor means making an imperative, serious promise to someone, so give your mentee the respect he or she deserves. Show your confidence in your mentee's abilities in each mentoring session. The mentee should be given the freedom to ask what topics or subjects he or she wants to talk about beforehand, and once you know, you should outline the key points you want to focus on ahead of time, and have a plan ready for conveying your details in an effective and expedient way.

3. Your mentee must feel relaxed in approaching you for advice or consultation and they must be taught to respect your schedule. Keep in mind your obligations and be ready to listen actively and with an open mind; provide counsel and advice when they are sought.

"The mentor should learn to say what their mentee needs to hear from them, not what the mentor thinks he or she might want to hear."

4. Queries need to be addressed, so be candid and straightforward with him or her. The mentor should learn to say what their mentee needs to hear from them, not what the mentor thinks he or she might want to hear. Be willing to debate and discuss in a tactful way. Provide useful, honest guidance.

5. Being a mentor, continue learning about what is going on in your industry or business, your school, your community, or the world at large.

6. Mentoring relationship is different from friendship. Care for your mentee's growth to see mentee succeed.

7. You must also be selfless about sharing what you know. You may even learn a thing or two from the experience.

The mentors also found the task challenging and they had to overcome hurdles, as mentioned in this case study. It is also indicated that they realised that mentoring needed to be individualised and that reflective processes ensured a mentoring experience that met their own needs, and especially when it is based on the situation.

Several mentors have overcome their challenges by talking, sharing and networking with other mentors and received clarification with requirements and expectations, as well as opportunities to share strategies and find solutions to issues. It is clear that the personal affiliation that develops between the mentor and mentee becomes central to the outcomes achieved through professional experience.

Mentors understood the need to organise time to converse with the mentee about the day's activities and lessons, as well as for feedback about teaching experiences. Mentors were also more aware of the need to map out opportunities for the learners to be involved in a wide range of experiences.

It can be seen from the results and discussion that there is a specific correlation between changed understandings and reformed mentoring practices. The results indicate that the mentor teachers who participated in the mentoring certificate program became explicitly aware of the relational, developmental and contextual elements of their role as mentor. The changed understandings the participants developed impacted on the mentoring practices; they indicate that the changes in mentoring practices encompassed a more holistic approach to mentoring.

5. Conclusion

Although this case study did not measure the changes or do a before and after comparison, it is obvious that the mentors in this research benefited from specific knowledge about the nature and process of mentoring. The results have identified that training for mentors should be centered on the act of providing skills and data and ensuring quality in the learner's experience.

"Mentoring is multi-faceted and depends on the individuals involved."

As a final conclusion, it must be noted that there is no one recipe for success in mentoring. Mentoring is multi-faceted and depends on the individuals involved; however, understanding the nature and procedure of mentoring and the distinct components that are involved in it will provide an informed approach that can enable all participants in mentoring to meet their goals.

Author contact information
Email: mala392000@gmail.com

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