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Successful “Talent Infusion” is critical for the health of India’s social enterprise sector. This collection of overview essays and case studies of social enterprises in India discusses some of the ways in which social enterprises and the support ecosystem are filling gaps in human resources. The cases and overview essays, written by leading researchers and educators in India, provide lessons on talent infusion for social enterprises and the ecosystem of incubators, educators, fellowship programs, and others interested in supporting the growth of social enterprises. They are aimed at a generalist audience and intended to be useful for classrooms and corporate training on recruiting and talent building in the social sector as well as social entrepreneurs seeking to learn from others’ experience.

The project also includes a collection of approximately 25 video-taped interviews offering first-person “voices of experience” from individuals involved in social enterprises’ human resource strategies, “talent” at various stages of their careers in social enterprises, and support organizations involved in talent infusion. These are available at http://villgro.org/vox-videos.

The first overview essay, “Talent Infusion In Social Enterprise” a joint effort by researchers from Niiti Consulting and Sattva Research, uses a broad survey and selected mini-cases to document the landscape of talent infusion in India: the ways in which social enterprises build their human capital through recruiting, training, or leveraging of short-term, part-time, and otherwise unconventional employees; the primary talent pipelines that they rely on; and the methods used for employee retention and building of organization culture. The cases delve into some of the challenges involved with attracting, retaining, and integrating people into the social enterprise environment, looking at these issues from both the employee and the organizations’ perspective.

Joseph Thomas (Centre for Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship (CSIE), IIT Madras), along with Professor Ramakrishna Reddy (Centre for Social Entrepreneurship, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, TISS) Mumbai) focus on a second form of talent infusion: social entrepreneurship training. Social entrepreneurship education has been identified as one of the fastest growing fields for business, academic and social development, but there has not yet been an assessment of the effectiveness with which this training produces either social entrepreneurs or effective employees in India. This chapter, “Evaluation of social entrepreneurship educational programs in India” provides a comparative overview of social enterprise educational courses currently available in India. It assesses the relevance and quality of these courses from three perspectives: students, educators, and current/future employers.

“Pre-Incubation Node for Talent Inclusion & Product Innovation - a bootstrapping technique for social enterprises” by Mitesh Gala (Founder of SEED, LLC), along with Arthi Gerald, Uday Wankawala and Vasanti Venugopal (National Entrepreneurship Network), covers a new model adopted to develop and promote innovative technologies by encouraging students to become technology entrepreneurs. The case identifies a potential new route for social enterprises to attract and build engineering talent for their own enterprises as well as contribute to the broader ecosystem. The program that they document is the result of collaboration between a social enterprise, an engineering college and a non-profit organization promoting entrepreneurship.
Three case studies look into specific talent infusion programs in more depth. Ross Baird, Jonathan Waldroup, and Michael Bugas’ “Frontier Market Scouts: Evaluation of Outcomes and Potential for Expansion” analyze the effectiveness of the Frontier Market Scouts and IDEX Fellowship program in developing a pool of social enterprise mentors and employees. Both programs combine intensive training with immersion in target markets to build on fellows existing business, development, or other enterprise skills. The authors study Frontier Market Scout placements internationally and particularly in India, placements of the IDEX Fellowship in Social Enterprise to analyze the importance of various characteristics of fellows’ background for performance, the effectiveness of training, the perceptions of value added by both fellows and the enterprises they work with, and the post-fellowship trajectories of individuals involved. The study also considers the transferability of these two international programs to the Indian context.

Professors C. Vijayalakshmi and Raghu Raman (IFMR)’s “Mentoring in Social Enterprises” use qualitative analysis of a number of cases of mentorship to understand the determinants of effective “talent infusion” by transferring skills and insights from a mentor to the social enterprise. Cases will be drawn from Villgro Innovation Foundation’s experience as well as mentors from the IIM Ahmedabad Center on Innovation, Incubation, and Entrepreneurship (CIIE)’s MentorEdge program.

“Talent Management At Ashwini,” by Professors Vijayalakshmi C and Raghuraman S (IFMR), along with Dr. Mahantu Yalsangi of the Association for Health Welfare in the Nilgiris (ASHWINI) analyze talent management practices in a social enterprise that is delivering healthcare to remote rural population in Tamil Nadu. As a health care provider, ASHWINI faces competition from commercial and larger enterprises for skilled nurses. They have addressed their talent management practices in various ways: by training locals to become nurses, creating Internship positions for attracting local or international talent, and otherwise working with potential and actual employees from the surrounding community. Debates about the merits of recruiting versus training mid-level employees are as common in social enterprise as any other field, but we have limited perspective on lessons from successes or failures of either approach in lower-paid but more mission-driven enterprises. The case documents lessons from the organization’s strategies over the years that would provide insights for other organizations working in competitive labor markets.

The last chapter, “Innovations in Nation Building: Gandhi Fellowship Program”, by Professor Neharika Vohra (IIM Ahmedabad), Professor Snigdha Patnaik (XIMB), and Niranjana Neelakantan documents an innovative fellowship program run by the Kaivalya Education Foundation (KEF). The main objective of KEF is to partner with school headmasters and the government’s school education machinery to bring about changes in state run primary schools. Each school principal, assumed to be the key agent for change in the school, is enrolled for a 3 year Principal Leadership Development Program and paired with a Gandhi Fellow (GF) who is part of a two-year “Gandhi Fellowship” program. The GF is recruited through a competitive selection process from colleges across the country. The PLDP program is the means for training the GF in learning to lead and catalyze changes in large complex systems. The GF program is conceived to create a cadre of youth who will be future nation builders. The case documents the design, processes, innovations, and lessons of the Gandhi Fellowship Program.
Overall, the collection documents and analyzes experience to deliver accessible, implementable lessons on how social enterprises can build human capital as well as how some of the main pipelines for talent can be made more effective.

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