



Student Startup Support System (S4)

REPORT of the Round Table Discussion on

“Envisaging a Vibrant Student Start-up Ecosystem in Gujarat a dialogue involving Student”

Date: 30th March, 2015

Time: 06:00 pm to 08:15 pm

Venue: Conference Hall, Student Startup Support System (S4) Co-creation center, GTU Ahmedabad Campus, ACPC Building, L.D College Campus, Ahmedabad

Background:

At <http://www.gtu.ac.in/circulars/15Mar/29032015.pdf> was published the invitation for the RoundTable.

We at GTU Innovation Council , feel entrepreneurship is not only emerging as a tool to create jobs in the country but it will be an important vehicle to motivate the young to develop their skills better.

The start-up ecosystem in India is in a promising phase and various actors need to play a crucial role across the spectrum right from the pre-incubation to the scale-up phase. It is being re-emphasized by policymakers, at national and state levels, that universities of the 21st century have to play a crucial role in up-scaling the student start-up ecosystems. They all are motivated by what Stanford has been able to do in shaping the Silicon Valley start-up ecosystem in USA.

GTU Innovation Council was set up on 2nd August 2010. We started working on the agenda of setting up the eco-system of entrepreneurship right from the academic year of 2010-11. GTU’s first cohort of Final Year BE students, joined the Final Year classes in July 2011. GTU instituted study of IPR and patenting process from 3rd September 2011. GTU’s Student Start-up Support System (S4) was established on 25th February 2012. The result is that TBIs in Ahmedabad are today mostly catering to the start-

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ups, set up by student, passing out from the affiliated colleges of GTU. GTU has been the most open platform to extend all possible support to all the incubation centres and allied institutes. GTU has been continuously sharing its insights derived from its massive experiments and presenting them at both national and international forums.

GTU's S4 Co-Creation Center (S4-C3) was established on May 1, 2013. In 2014 GTU has intervened through a very practical Student Start-Up Policy and its policy for the Skilling India mission for up-dating the skills of the engineering students. Both the Union Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship and the State Ministry have gone through GTU's start-up policy recommendations and welcomed the first such move by any state technology university. GTU's Student Start-Up Policy has been used verbatim by Kerala Technological University. The advisor to the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, Shri Chanderbabu Naidu has recommended that AP Universities may also follow GTU's Student Start-Up Policy.

The Roundtable Discussion of 30th March 2015:

The roundtable discussion was arranged by GTU's Student Start-up Support System (S4) to discuss possible ways to rejuvenate Ahmedabad Start-up ecosystem by increasing collaboration across various incubators and other startup stakeholders.

This session was convened and moderated by Mr.Hiranmay Mahanta, Honorary Director, GTU Innovation Council in cooperation with all incubation centers in the city of Ahmedabad.

Various opinions from the stake holders were shared as below to start with during this discussion:

- ✓ GTU student Start-up policy should be implemented thoroughly at grassroots level with a clear understanding of all aspects of the Policy.
- ✓ There is a huge requirement to increase start-up literacy across school and college ecosystems.
- ✓ Organized industry clusters across Gujarat have to play a better role as mentors and other supports through their existing experiences.
- ✓ GTU's policy is to collaborate locally and to compete globally.
- ✓ While building incubation infrastructure, physical infra is not the key starting point. The culture of entrepreneurship will play a crucial role. Hence GTU focuses on inculcating a shift in the mindset in the beginning.
- ✓ Political and public system patronage is required to upscale and sustain the start-up culture.
- ✓ Significant resource commitments must be made to deliver the desired results in every innovation and start-up ecosystem.

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Ms. Priyanka Chopra, CIIE, IIM-Ahmedabad

- ✓ Lack of coordination between incubators (Ahmedabad has number of incubators) is not bringing in the best output that this start-up ecosystem can bring in. Better synergy based on complementary competencies need to be leveraged.
- ✓ Physical Infrastructure is not sufficient to build a vibrant start-up ecosystem. A lot of soft infra plays a crucial role in developing and delivering in a tech start-up ecosystem.
- ✓ Requirement of comfort zone creation, links need to make at personal and institutional level.
- ✓ **Fail fast methodology can help student startup to learn and rise faster. Young start-ups across start-up ecosystems need to be exposed with such real-life scenarios so that young start-up aspirants will not reinvent the wheel.**
- ✓ Best practices should be shared at network and institute level so that more young students can leverage such inputs.



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Mr. Amit Singh Gohil, Executive Director TiE Ahmedabad

- ✓ Ahmedabad start-up ecosystem need to create few success stories through quality Start-ups to inspire others to take more such steps.
- ✓ **Competition with rewards could be a way forward to attract young talents to solve challenges and build enterprise around them.**
- ✓ TiE can bring in high quality mentors and assist young start-ups within and outside the incubation centers.
- ✓ **Regular mentor mentee interaction sessions need to be arranged in one on one basis so that better handholding of the start-ups can be made.**
- ✓ One key asset would be having a vibrant start-up mentoring network to help young innovators and start-ups to get best possible orientation across the start-up value chain.
- ✓ Academic universities in Gujarat are not playing up to the mark role to promote student start-ups. Every college and its stakeholders need to look entrepreneurship as alternative vehicle to build skills of the young professional students.

Mr. Prakash Vora, COO, Venture Studio, Ahmedabad University

- ✓ **Play on our strength (focus on local scenario, Ahmedabad-Business is friendly place, premier educational institute exist in single city, excellent infrastructure, security, safety, and support for entrepreneurship). He stressed that local start-up ecosystem should leverage its existing strengths and build own start-up ecosystems. He shared that every start-up ecosystem has its own trait and challenges and each of them function based on different bottom lines.**
- ✓ **He stressed that lack of professional employees is also seen as a major challenge for start-ups to grow and compete within the local start-up ecosystem.**
- ✓ He shared that strengths of each stakeholder in the ecosystem need to be further empowered by mutual cooperation and bootstrapping.
- ✓ Organize centralize workshops of capacity building for all incubators; eco-system actors together build synergy.
- ✓ Start-up should not depend only on Government fund; alternative ways need to be explored too.
- ✓ **Knowledge Network is important so it need to be given priority.**
- ✓ Right incubator systems and awareness about the programs are very important.



Mr. Anay Mashruwala, Entrepreneur, Ahmedabad University Incubation Cell

- ✓ **Ahmedabad is a powerful industrial hub since years and it needs similar push for start-up movement too.**
- ✓ SMEs and start-ups need to be dealt separately. The means of production and method of exchanges are changing significantly so same ways of doing business as before will not do.
- ✓ Every academic institute need to invest patience fully in the activities related to innovation and promotion of entrepreneurship.
- ✓ Only tagline of industry-academia connections on paper will not suffice, rather some concrete ground works are essential in every such scenario with real life exposure to young professional students.
- ✓ **Start-up activities and celebrations should be made an important activity in city based events and governance systems to bring in public attention into the agenda. Municipalities, cities and other similar bodies may give a big patronage to promote start-up culture in local context.**

Mahesh Krovvidi, CEO of the National Design Business Incubator, an initiative of NID, Ahmedabad

- ✓ Ahmedabad has more non-technical start-ups. Technology start-up ecosystem need more push both at action and policy strata.
- ✓ Limited availability of mentors also a key challenge and even existing mentoring networks are unorganized.
- ✓ **Technology (Digital) product has more success as less hurdle in clearance from government moreover youngster purchase such product faster. Similar dynamics need to be studied so that hard technology based start-ups can even see some success stories to start with.**
- ✓ **Market access is a crucial need for early stage start-ups and separate networks need to be created who will facilitate such needs at grassroots level.**
- ✓ **More design based incubators and support systems are required and design thinking could be essential component of start-up making so that optimal efficiency is obtained in less time.**

Dr. Vikram Singh Parmar, Venture Studio

- ✓ Academia need to play better role. Only teaching learning process will not bring the best out of young professional students. Both commitment and leadership will matter in spearheading start-up culture in university systems.
- ✓ One of the key Challenges is mindset of youngsters. Society and universities need to better groom the young minds .
- ✓ How to push students for entrepreneurship? (From 3rd year). Foundation is important. He stressed that back integrate the incubation process right in 3rd year of UG programs of engineering education.
- ✓ Experience mentor should come ahead and help young start-up (adopt). More exploration required to scout and engage such mentors who are real assets for early stage start-ups.



Mr. Pravash Dey, Global Entrepreneurs Partnership (GEP)

- ✓ Platform supporting early stage start-ups are missing in city based initiatives in Gujarat.
- ✓ Students require support when they take risks in university campuses. Citing examples of NACUE in UK, he stressed that India need similar initiatives.
- ✓ Are we really supporting start-ups? The body washing efforts will not take the student start-ups to long way if they are not given depth support through set of interventions.
- ✓ More private endeavors needed to take local start-up ecosystem to next orbit. It has to happen both at individual and institutional level.

Dr. Manishbhai Shah, Vice-President, LJ group of institutes

- ✓ Create change in Eco-System such student believes in existing support systems
- ✓ Risk taking mind set for students need to be tapped early and given extra support to them in campuses and beyond.
- ✓ Information sharing through common platform is of crucial need as many students are having either very small and no awareness about national and global scenario in this domain. This do not motivates them enough to try something series during their college days.
- ✓ Missing synchronization between Investor, Universities, Institute Management and Students. This reduces a significant part of the efficiency of the entire process and yield less efficient result.

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- ✓ Understanding grass roots reality is must. **University should not make learning a superficial job rather make it a hard earned degree by practical learning.** Academic environment must embrace possible innovation and start-up experiments. These endeavors should not be seen as just additional efforts but they should be rather seen as a key component of holistic learning.



Dr. Rupesh Vasani, Dean GTU

- ✓ Supporting early stage start-ups after prototyping stage is crucial as the students face a huge challenge to traverse then immediate next hurdle in many cases.
- ✓ Excitation to do something tempt students and other start-ups to take off quickly but if no support system is valuable after the initial stage, there is a chance that start-up will collapse.
- ✓ Top policy makers miss to understand the ground reality. Some mechanism must be there where feedbacks from the ground realities of the start-up ecosystems should trigger next level policies to promote innovation and entrepreneurship.

Dr. Chetan Bhatt, Principal, GEC, Gandhinagar

- ✓ To make student inclined to entrepreneurship they need to be mentored by **entrepreneurial faculty members in the campus.**

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- ✓ Govt. Eng. colleges and other institutes getting comparatively better quality students to pursue engineering courses need to be tapped as quality and skilled students would be holding the key.
- ✓ **Expose more and more students and let them work with early stage technology companies so that they get real exposure and then try to start.**
- ✓ Local academia is not very closely working with Gujarat Start-up ecosystem. Penetration and ground level literacy about student start-up culture is very nascent. This need to be improved.
- ✓ Create academic incentives and other such interventions for students and other stakeholders in campus so that more students will try to be job creator rather than job seekers.



Prakash Vani, founder, Platypus design

- ✓ More individuals need to play active role along with existing incubators to propel local entrepreneurship ecosystem.
- ✓ Even some incubators need to be set up for sectors specific areas like Design and others.
- ✓ Public policies need to be blended based on ground reality. More incentives need to be created for institutional endeavor to promote entrepreneurship.
- ✓ Govt. to facilitate more private incubators along with not for profit govt. grant based TBIs.

Anirudh Thakur, Student Innovator and entrepreneur from Shimla

- ✓ Only excitement to make student startup will not suffice. Without proper handholding, it sometime creates challenges for further development.
- ✓ Start-ups should be considered as potential client when govt. as a market.
- ✓ More fabrication and design angels are required apart from only financial angels.
- ✓ Academia should realize that only appreciation and awards will not help students to convert their projects to products and start-ups.
- ✓ All universities should create **end to end student start-up support system to ensure that ideas do not die in the pipeline of mind to market.**
- ✓ **Pre incubation ecosystems need to be given more emphasis so that the supply side of the start-up ecosystem does not get choked. Careful integration of pre incubation and incubation systems need to be done.**

Mr. Atul Shah, Secretary, LD Engineering Alumni Association

- ✓ He shared that the alumni association of higher learning institutes can boot strap young start-ups of the campus in the early stage.
- ✓ Alumni networks need to create small but definite seed fund support to help young innovators get easy access to risk capitals at early stage.
- ✓ **Alumni entrepreneurial mentors should spare time to mentor young start-ups in the campus or outside.**
- ✓ Ahmedabad is having best B school, Tech school, Design school and others but more and more collaboration required to bring the collective strengths of local and other alumni networks of these impacting higher learning institutes.