ABSTRACT

In the information-based, skills-intensive economy of the twenty-first century, one thing is clear: knowing means growing. Whatever was learnt in the yester years by a professional was applicable for the past time and may not be equally applicable today. To be effective and successful, one has to unlearn the old skills, knowledge and habits and relearn the new ones to be able to survive in this turbulent and dynamic environment. Those who are not prepared for learning new skills and knowledge and are hesitant to take a proactive approach in the world of work, no doubt, will join the category of obsolescents. Professional obsolescence has deep rooted consequences, for it can not only affect the individual, but also his department and the whole organization. This in turn will affect the whole economy. Therefore, it is crucial to deal with this problem at its nascent stage.

The effective functioning of managers in a rapidly changing and highly competitive environment will depend largely on the extent to which they are able to keep themselves updated with the latest knowledge, skills and developments in their field so that they are not rendered obsolete. A review of literature revealed that there is no scale in the Indian context for measuring Professional Obsolescence. It is in this context that the present research was undertaken. Earlier work in this area showed that some of the causes for obsolescence are: Level of skills and knowledge; Attitude towards learning; Organizational Climate and Policies; Level of Motivation; and Attitude of
Superior. These were taken as some of the parameters for constructing the Professional Obsolescence Scale. A scale containing 34 items was constructed after successive rounds of tryout and revision. The reliability and validity of the Scale were established and norms were developed. To establish reliability of the scale, test-retest approach was adopted. On the basis of Factor analysis, the 34 items were categorised under eight dimensions namely: (1) Professional Knowledge/Skills; (2) Organizational Climate; (3) Motivation to update; (4) Organizational Support; (5) Self-Initiated Updating Activities; (6) On-the-job Updating Activities; (7) Attitude Towards Learning; and (8) Attitude of Superior. Correlations between different dimensions were found to be statistically significant indicating that the different parameters taken for Professional Obsolescence Scale (POS) are highly relevant and inter-related.

The Professional Obsolescence Scale was validated against two validation tools: (1) Job Involvement Questionnaire (JIQ); and (2) Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI). The correlation results of the study reveal that Professional Obsolescence has a negative and significant correlation with Job Involvement and Personal Accomplishment - a dimension of Burnout and a positive and significant correlation with Depersonalization and Emotional Exhausation dimensions of burnout. Thus, it can be inferred that the Professional Obsolescence Scale has the requisite validity.

To tackle any problem it is necessary to identify the extent and the factors responsible for causing the problem. This scale would be helpful in identifying
the extent and the specific causes of obsolescence. Further, this information could form the basis for taking remedial steps at the individual as well as organization level in the form of initiatives for self development and interventions at the organization level for training and job enrichment.