

2012



**RESULTS FOR DEVELOPMENT
INSTITUTE**

**INNOVATIVE SECONDARY EDUCATION FOR SKILLS
ENHANCEMENT (ISESE)**

**Skills for Employability:
South Asia**

August 31, 2012

Skills for Employability: South Asia

PREPARED BY:

Dr. Aarti Srivastava

Prof. Mona Khare

National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA)

New Delhi, India

Results for Development Institute (R4D) is a non-profit organization whose mission is to unlock solutions to tough development challenges that prevent people in low- and middle-income countries from realizing their full potential. Using multiple approaches in multiple sectors, including Global Education, Global Health, Governance and Market Dynamics, R4D supports the discovery and implementation of new ideas for reducing poverty and improving lives around the world.

This paper was prepared for the Innovative Secondary Education for Skills Enhancement (ISESE) project, led by R4D with support from the Rockefeller Foundation. For more information on the ISESE project, please contact Michelle Engmann: mengmann@resultsfordevelopment.org.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Education is both a cause and consequence of development. It is essentially seen as an aid to individual's economic achievement as well as national development. Skill development is the key factor for increased employability and productivity, which in turn will lead to economic growth of the nation. Governments of the developing countries will have to rethink education and training policies recognizing the multiplicity of channels through which skills are acquired by an individual. Skills can be acquired through pre-employment training, on-the job training and through formal programs. These include technical and vocational education at schools, universities, and tertiary institutions like NGO's and other enterprises. The literature on Economics is built on the Shultz-Becker Individual Choice Model of Human Capital Investment, in which the individual compares the income benefit of further education with the cost of ongoing study i.e. opportunity cost. Initially these models focused on a single choice made at a key moment in a young person's transition from school to work; more recent contributions have treated human capital decisions as sequential choices repeated year after year. Economic models have sought to explain how individuals choose their careers and their levels of education based on their innate abilities. 'Signaling' or 'Sorting' models assume that individuals know their abilities while their potential employers do not.

Human development pivots around expanding choices. Education has an enabling role in an individual's life by helping her discover and develop her abilities and subsequently make informed choices. Choice can be conceptualized in a variety of ways. Significant disciplinary differences exist between approaches that emphasize the role of individual agency in making choices (economics of education), structural conditions that constrain choice (sociology of education) and those that incorporate community involvement in making choices (indigenous studies). Even after the choice for a particular course is made, the individuals can still end up in finding themselves in employment where the qualification requirements are entirely different, which is known as the education-employment mismatch. This may be due to insufficient demand for people with particular skills, or maybe the result of a person completing a qualification in a field where they have no particular ability or interest or may be caused by structural barriers in the labor market such as discrimination.

There are increasing calls to integrate vocational and academic subjects in schools as part of emphasis on an emerging 'new work order', 'new vocationalism', and 'Knowledge society', potentially bringing together the needs of employers and schooling in a new way and giving renewed impetus to lifelong learning. This requires us to revisit our existing secondary schools and relook at the current mandate of the secondary boards of education. Moreover, analysis of the resources, time, teachers, curriculum etc. will help us identify the strengths and weaknesses of our secondary education system in terms of skill development and the labor market. The individuals in the system will have to understand the link between skill development and school programme and how to use these elements to create career pathways (Gandhian system of education). A Scottish policy programme entitled '*Determined to Succeed*' is attempting to put these principles into practice. In a number of northern European countries (notably Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Denmark and Luxembourg) there are highly formalized systems based on apprenticeships. Japan also has a highly formalized system involving close relationship between individual school and individual firms.

With the advancement of human capital theory homogeneity is no longer assumed and labor demand has come to be interpreted in a set of 'markets' each with demand for a specific productivity determining workers characteristics, with education and training acquiring paramount importance. Therefore, it is critical to build correspondence between education and work and also have a sector wise demand and supply analysis both quantitatively and qualitatively for the holistic development of the individual and leapfrogging for the nation.

The skill for employability in South Asia essentially focuses on employers perspectives on skill requirement from school leavers. The South Asian countries have diverse people living together on the basic principles of engagement, absorption and accommodation. The existing boundaries also have specific characteristics, where South Asian countries do not share boundaries with each other except with and through India .This makes the region geo politically ‘Indo –centric’. With the boundaries being porous and landmass being contagious and open, it allows easy flow of people, goods and ideas.

The demographic profiles of the focus countries i.e. India, Pakistan and Bangladesh are similar therefore the youth population has to be suitably harnessed to make them productive and give a fillip to economic growth. The human resource managers from industry, especially from the high growth sectors were invited for the focus group discussion to hear from the horse’s mouth the expectation of the employers from school leavers. The discussions were held in New Delhi X category (administrative capital), Mumbai X category (Financial capital) and Bhopal a B1 category state capital. Lahore is the capital of Pakistan province of Punjab and second largest city in Pakistan. One of the most densely populated cities in the world, Lahore remains an economic, political, transportation, entertainment and educational hub. Dhaka is the capital of Bangladesh and a mega city. It is the center of the economic, political and cultural life of Bangladesh. The findings from each city were very revealing and converged on generic skills as a major demand from all kinds of employers, both public and private.

SECTION I: INTRODUCTION

A region is generally known as a cluster of geographically proximate countries that share common historical bonds, cultural, social identities and economic, political and strategic interests with a desire to live in harmony and cooperation. The term South Asia has been in use only for the past five decades or so. It is the 'Indian Sub-continent' that has been in longer use. The American Area Studies Program popularized the term South Asia. The South Asian countries today have diverse people living together on the basic principles of engagement, absorption and accommodation. The existing boundaries also have a specific characteristic, where South Asian countries do not share borders with each other except with and through India. This makes the region geo-politically 'Indo-centric' and inherently bilateral in intra regional cooperation but also in normal bilateral relations. With the boundaries being porous and landmass being contagious and open, they allow easy flow of people, goods and ideas across the borders interacting with economic and political relations.

More than 150 years long colonial rule on the Indian sub-continent also distorted its economic space. The British developed the model of industrialization and transportation only in the heartland and those areas of Indian Sub continent that enhanced their profitability and facilitated their economic progress in their home country. The periphery of the sub-continent was left underdeveloped or undeveloped.

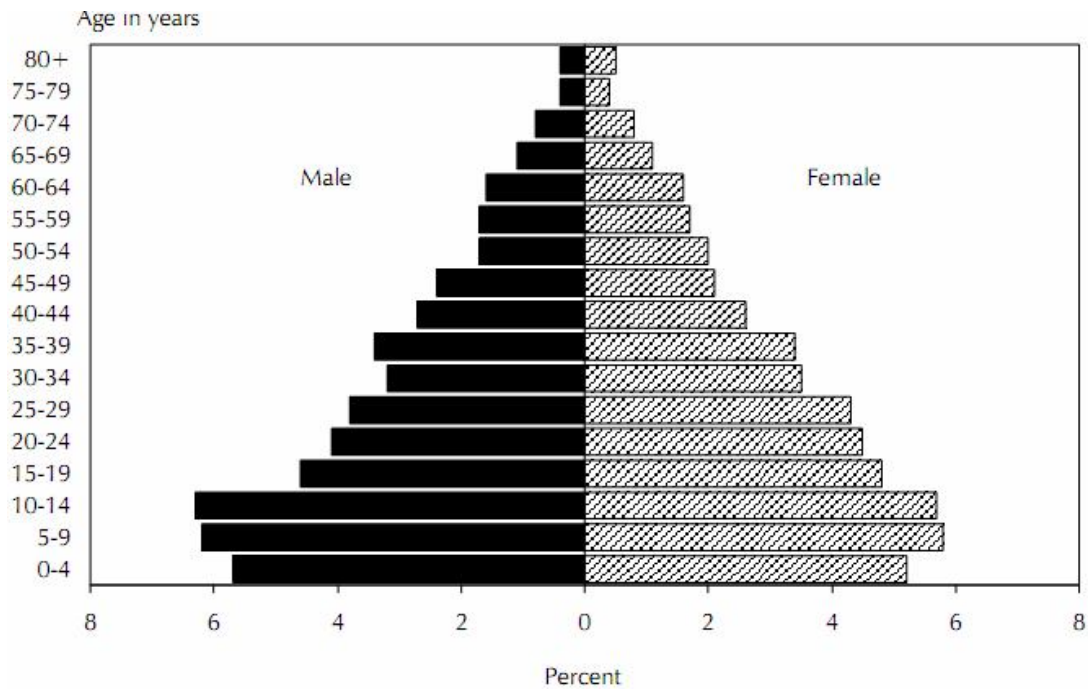
Bangladesh and Pakistan represented most of that underdeveloped periphery. So did India's Northeast and northwest, Nepal, Bhutan and the Maldives. This has naturally created a potential for economic restlessness and inequality in South Asia, which is getting reflected strongly in some of its political conflicts and tension as well as in day to day bilateral and regional relations. Within the South Asian region, the smaller countries suspect that both in bilateral and regional economic engagements the larger and stronger economy of India will secure more benefits at their cost.

India

India derived its name from the River Indus, which flows through its northern parts of India, Pakistan and finally falls into the Arabian Sea. India is one of the greatest and oldest civilizations flourished on its banks, around 4,300 years ago. Since independence, India has been a democracy. The country is a socialist republic with parliamentary form of government.

The Indian economy is the eleventh largest in the world by nominal GDP and the third largest by purchasing power parity. The country is one of the G20 major economies and a member of BRIC. India is one of the fastest growing economies of the world led primarily by the huge increase in the size of the middle class consumer, a large labor force and a considerable foreign investment. India is blessed with demographic dividend, which when skilled appropriately will lead to high individual productivity along with national development. Better designed labor regulations can attract more labor intensive investments and create jobs for India's unemployed millions and those trapped in poor quality jobs. Given the country's momentum of growth, the window of opportunity must not be lost for improving the job prospects through skill for the 80 million new entrants who are expected to join the workforce over the next decade. Out of the total workforce 7per cent are in the organized sector, two – thirds of which are in the public sector. The NSSO survey estimated that in 2004 –05, 8.3per cent of the population was unemployed. The age pyramid below brings out clearly the demographic bulge that India has to skill in order to take care of its youth energy. Such initiatives will also enhance national productivity.

Figure: Population structure of India



Source: NFHS-3, 2005-06

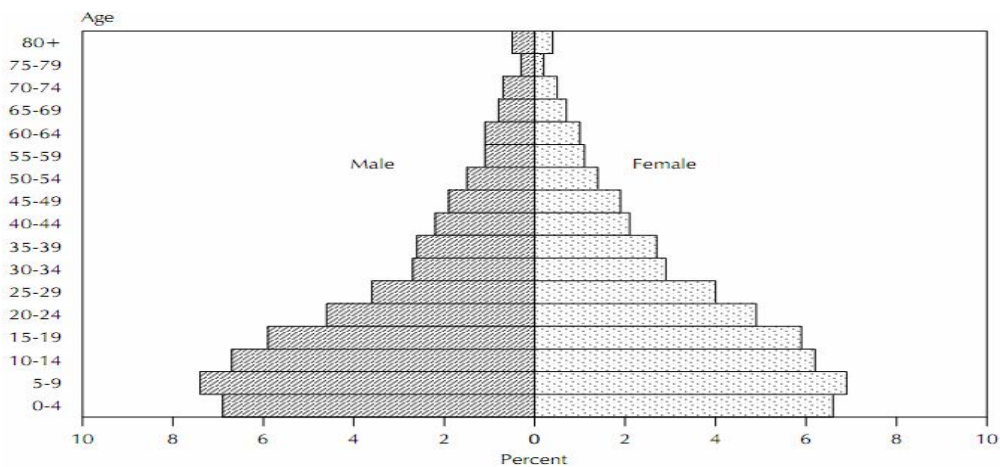
Pakistan

Pakistan, a developing economy, has suffered from decades of internal political disputes and low level of foreign investments. Textiles account for most of Pakistan’s export earnings but Pakistan’s failure to expand a viable export for other manufacturers has left the country to shift in world demand. Other long term challenges include expanding investment in education, Healthcare and electricity production and reducing dependence on foreign donors. Despite severe challenges, the economy has shown resilience in the out going years. Growth in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for 2009-10 on an inflation adjusted basis has been recorded at a provisional 4.1per cent. The industrial output expanded by 4.9per cent and services sector grew by 4.6per cent.

Signs of a turn around in segments of the economy are not withstanding. There are continuing areas of concern and reasons for caution. The recovery in economic growth is fragile and will remain so till the weaknesses in the macro-economic framework all forcefully addressed. In order to effectively provide sustainable employment opportunities for the young entrants to the labor force. Through skill development is desirable. The medium term prospects for the economy are promising provided the current path of reform is not abandoned. Pakistan has achieved fairly impressive early success in its efforts to stabilize the economy. Protecting the economic recovery is of paramount importance. Greater realism about the prospects and accurate forecast about resources and available funds for the development plans at each level of government is needed. The most important initiative should be bringing people to the centre stage, by appropriately matching skills for employment for the new entrants to the labor force.

The population of Pakistan is estimated around 160 million (Government of Pakistan, 2007). Pakistan is the sixth most populous country in the world. The population density in Pakistan is 225.19 persons per square kilometer. In following figure the age sex structure of the population of Pakistan is represented.

Figure: Population structure of Pakistan



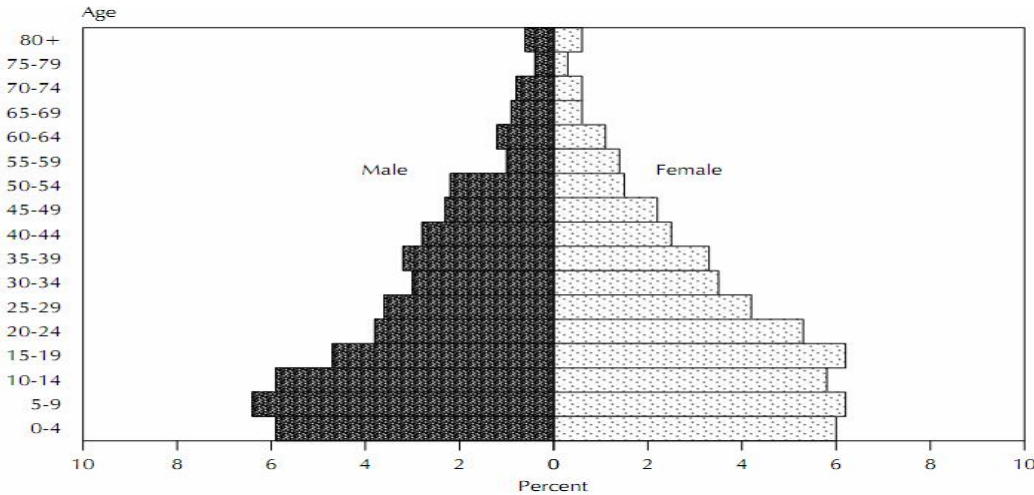
Source: PDHS, 2007-08

The age- sex structure of the population depicted above reflects clear indication of demographic dividend for Pakistan. The population structure is of pyramidal shape with a heavy bottom reflecting that the large numbers of people are of the younger age. In Pakistan 41 percent the population is under 15 years. There are 55 percent of the people in the working age group i.e. 15-64 years. The emerging demographic trends in Pakistan, point towards a growing population between the age of 10 to 25 years ready to enter the labour market expecting to find jobs, only to find out that their education and training have not provided them with the appropriate skills. It will, therefore, be difficult for the large semi-skilled and unskilled workers to find a decent job in the labour market. With such a labour force Pakistan cannot position itself in the international market to compete and increase foreign remittances from abroad international market to compete and increase foreign remittances from abroad

Bangladesh

Bangladesh is a country of more than 150 million populations, with more than 40 per cent of its people below poverty level. Agriculture is the predominant profession of the people. Approximately 60 per cent of its population is landless or marginally landless. This entails that most of the population are under resourced in terms of physical assets and human capacities. According to the labor force survey 2001-03 conducted, the percentage distribution of employed persons (15 years and above) is 30.6 per cent of the total population. This indicates that challenges in the skills development sector for gainful employment are formidable. Bangladesh is the most densely populated country in the world (920 persons per square kilometer), with the population size of about 150 million. Bangladesh experienced 45 percent increase in population in the first half of the last century. In the latter half of the last century the population tripled.

Figure: Population structure of Bangladesh



Source: BDHS, 2007-08

It can be observed from the figure that youngest age group has the highest share in overall population. The share of female is slightly lower than that of male in the youngest age group. Around 50 percent of the population of Bangladesh is in the age group of 5-29. In this age group male accounts for 50 percent of overall male population and female accounts for 53 percent of overall female population.

According to an Asian Development Bank Report entitled ‘Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction in Bangladesh (2004)’, there has been a moderate acceleration in economic growth during the 1990’s compared to earlier periods. The growth of GDP was supported by a rising rate of investment. According to the World Bank Bangladesh Country Assistance Strategy (CAS) 2006-2009, Bangladesh has taken large strides towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals. It increased gross primary enrollment from 72 per cent in 1980 to 98 per cent in 2001 and has eliminated gender disparity in the primary and secondary enrollment. On the other hand, infant mortality has sharply declined; food security has increased and gains have been made in the income. The share of population in poverty has declined from 59 per cent in 1990 to 50 per cent in 2000. The snapshots presented by the major players paints a mixed picture, suggesting that while the overall development initiatives show upward trend, there are areas like ‘skill development’ which are seriously challenged with implications for poverty reduction.

Other South Asian Countries

In the last six seven years, skill training and employability of youth has emerged as a priority in every South Asian country. Policy makers and planners have come to this realization that skill are at the core of a improving the employability of an individual and also at the core of the countries’ growth and development. This is particularly relevant in the context of the developing countries, who are seeking higher and sustainable growth rate. The south Asian countries face the demographic challenge of youth bulge in its age sex compositions and job market as against the demographic transition of shrinking labor force in the European countries. Along with this the need fro skilled labor force and the issues of employability are getting priority. Vocational education and training are seen as the way out and the way ahead in this regard. Apart from the three focus countries, namely, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, the other four countries that comprise South Asia, namely, Afghanistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bhutan

are also focusing equally on skill development and employability of the young labor force. Some of the initiatives taken by these are discussed here.

Afghanistan in the aftermath of conflict has faced with severe shortage of skilled man power. To tackle with the issue the Government of Afghanistan developed many policies and strategies. The national development strategy (2007), the national education strategy (NESP, 2007-2008), NESP II (2010) and the Interim strategy for education (2010-2011) are a few among them. The recently added vocational education and training component of the national priority programme is important in this regard. Each of these strategies is focusing on establishing the link between the efforts of economic growth and the need of the skilled labor pool. The government is trying to 'Competence-Certify' skilled personnel who are directly employable after the skills training. The major constraints are very low enrolment in higher education, very enrollment in VET programs (only 5per cent), lack of licensing and certification, lack of regulatory control of the service provides, low competence level of the teachers and trainers of VET. However, over the time number of VET institutions and teachers are increasing. But quality is still an issue.

Nepal has a small but growing stock of human capital. There are under employment of existing skilled labor force, skill gaps and mis-matches in the emerging economy. In order to fully harness the human resources of the country, the governments need to invest more resources. More than 75per cent of the immigrant workers of Nepal are unskilled. This most of the time leads to low remittances per migrant. The provision of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) is limited and is unequally distributed over the country.

In Bhutan, creation of large scale employment is one of the key focuses of the Tenth Five Year Pan. In order to generate the targeted workforce, the current vocational educational education and training system needs to be strengthened. The major concerns of this area are quality, capacity and employability. The key initiatives by the government of Bhutan are diversification of courses, creation of a framework external participation in vocational training sector, creation of both public and private institutions, enhancement of quality, strengthen the framework for accreditation and quality assurance, to improve the attractiveness of VET as a rewarding, mainstream choice for the students.

Shortage of skilled labour is a problem in Sri Lanka also. Especially after the tsunami and during the reconstruction work the shortage of skilled labour has proved too acute. Vocational education and training in Sri Lanka is managed by the Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission of the Ministry of Vocational & Technical Training. Training includes course based curriculum at vocational technical training centres and apprenticeship at private or public organisations. Higher education in vocational fields could be archived though several universities. The National Vocational Qualifications Systems in Sri Lanka (NVQSL) provides a structured seven levels of qualifications from Level 1 to Level 7. Vocational education and training is carried out for degree level at the Open University, Sri Lanka and the University of Vocational Technology, as well as at diploma level at 37 technical colleges, Sri Lanka Institute of Advanced Technical Education and the Sri Lanka School of Agriculture.

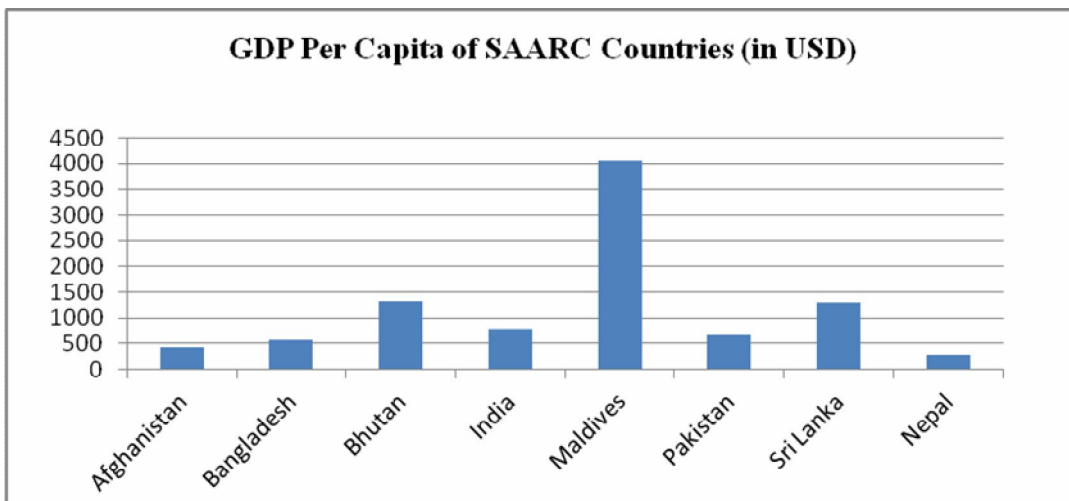
Apart from these, the Ministry of Education has launched a non-formal vocational education program which allows school drop-outs and adults who did not complete their school education, to earn a living, through self-employment. Most of these courses are held at community centres and they cover a wide range of fields such as dressmaking, beauty culture, hairdressing, stitching, carpentry, plumbing, painting and so on.

SECTION II: SETTING THE STAGE FOR SKILLS AND EMPLOYABILITY

South Asia – A Brief Economic Profile

South Asia, home to a population of 1.28 billion, accounts for almost 22 per cent of the world's population, but only 1.8 per cent of the world's GDP, and about one per cent of the world trade. Per capita incomes on an average in the region do not exceed \$400. It has been among the rapidly growing regions of the world such that about 40 per cent of the world's poor live in this region. The picture is undeniably dismal. The South Asian economies differ rather significantly in size. India accounts for more than three fourth of the region's GDP. Pakistan and Bangladesh are medium sized economies followed by Sri Lanka and Nepal. While agriculture has been the predominant sector, South Asia has also been characterized by the early development of the services sector, and not as in East Asia, by industry and manufacturing. In particular, manufacturing constituted only 10-20 per cent of GDP in all South Asian countries. The low outward orientation in South Asia confined the growth of the industrial sector to satisfy domestic demand. Moreover, regulation of the industrial sector and an inflexible labor market prevented faster growth and creation of employment opportunities in industry.

Figure: Size of SAARC Economies



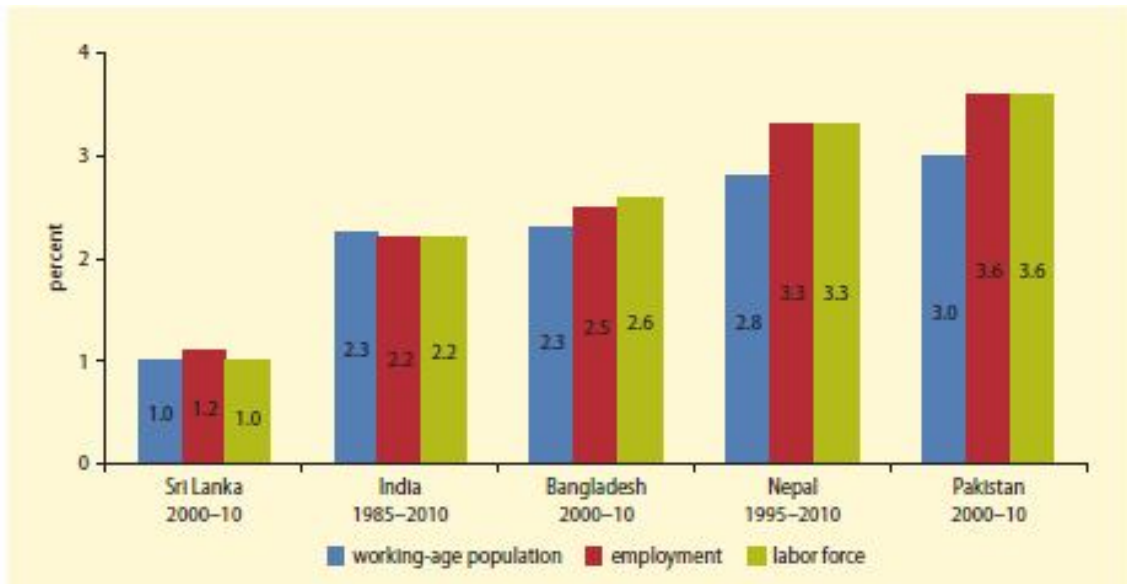
Source: World Bank (2011)

India has adopted a preferential policy towards investment in SAARC countries. Initially, a fast track channel for processing of investment proposals had been created to expedite projects. This route has later been further liberalized. India has the potential to invest in wide ranging fields in Bangladesh, most of which has remained untapped so far. Though a Joint Economic Council was immediately formed after the liberalization of Bangladesh, it did not bring the expected benefits. Needless to say, joint ventures within this region would go a long way in strengthening economic ties and add a milestone to the future realm of cooperation within SAARC.

The South Asian region has experienced some of the highest growth rates in the world, with investments in skills playing a significant role in helping national economies to adjust to changes in working practices, advances in technology, and challenges associated with globalization. In some countries this process has been more successfully managed and significant advances have been achieved in growth rates and employment levels, but in others it has resulted in stagnation of economic

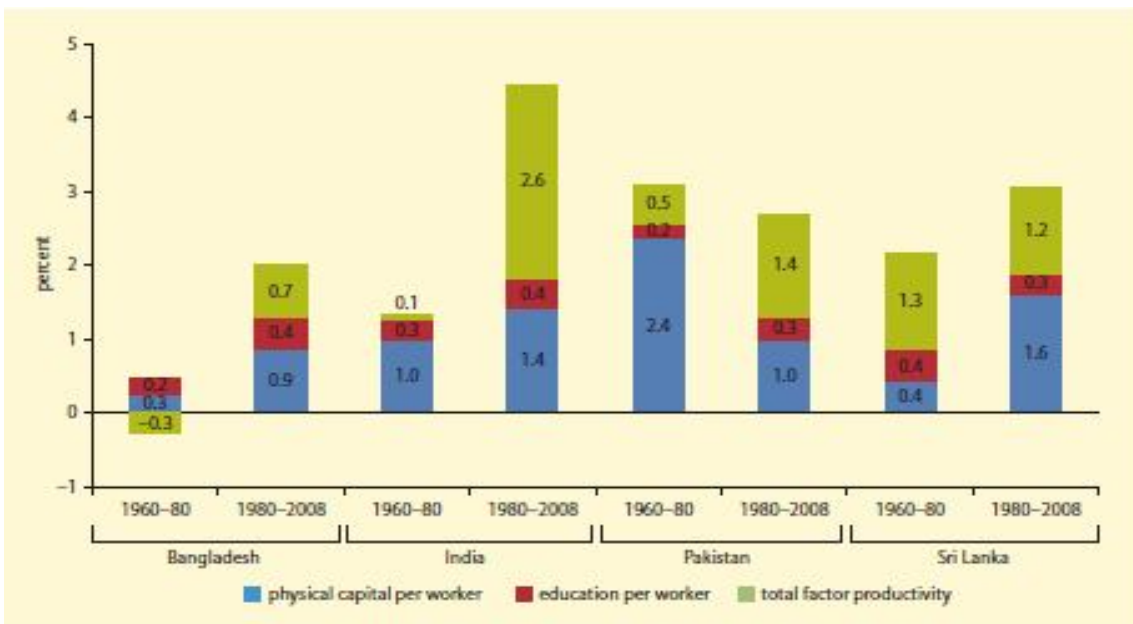
sectors, underemployment, rising unemployment levels and social exclusion for large sections of society.

Figure: Annual growth in working age population, employment and labor force



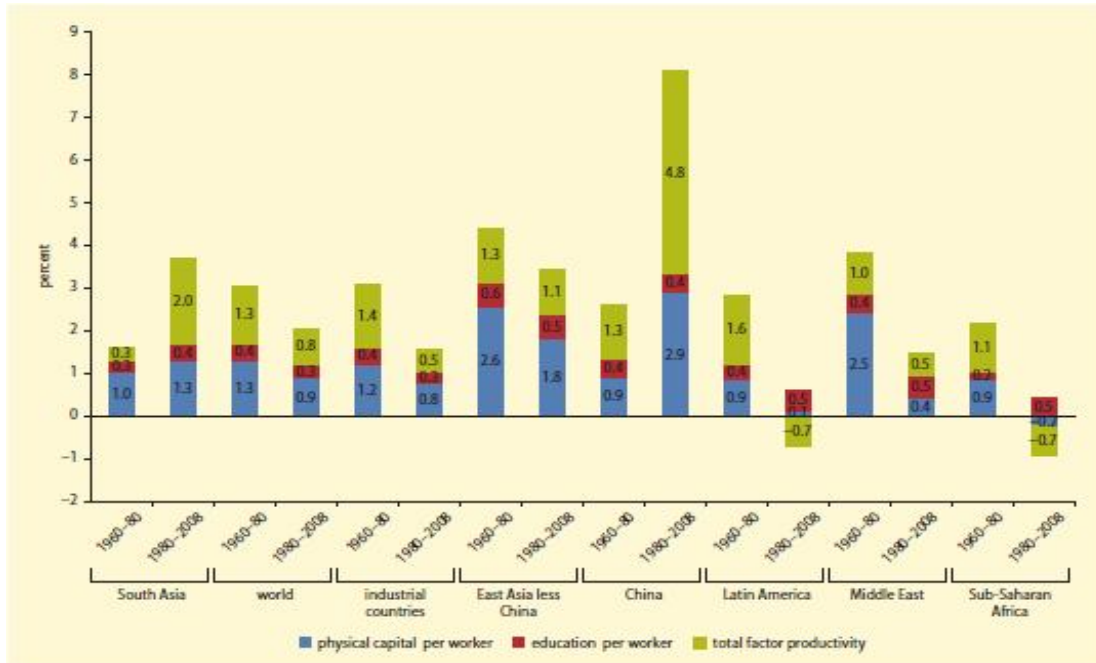
Source: World Bank (2011)

Figure: Sources of annual growth in labor productivity (by region)



Source: World Bank (2011)

Figure: Sources of annual growth in labor productivity (world)



Source: World Bank (2011)

The tools that are available for governments to manage this change must be capable of responding to the new opportunities posed by globalisation, yet at the same time address domestic challenges associated with demographic shifts in population, increased urbanisation and the in formalisation of labour markets.

Demography, Urbanisation, Skills and Employment: Call for Attention

Across the region, population growth, combined with migration from rural to urban areas and increased urbanisation, has resulted in large pools of semi and unskilled workers, many of whom are unable to integrate socially, politically or economically into mainstream society. The failure to provide this group with the appropriate skills, or support the upgrading of their existing ones, represents a loss of potential talent across a generation and could lead to political discontent. Government, development partners and donors must ensure that these capacity constraints are addressed.

Lack of Decent and Productive Employment

Some countries in South Asia are more affected from the financial crisis than others. The global economic downturn, coupled with heightened risk aversion in financial markets, has begun to hurt investment in the region. However, while economic growth is contained by the financial crisis, it is less so in South Asian countries than in many other developing countries because of their high savings rates, good management of public deficits over the years and limited toxic assets on their banks' balance sheets.

Unemployment is especially hitting youth; with rates in south Asian countries on average three to four times higher than adult unemployment rates (youth unemployment in developed countries is usually 1.5-2 times greater than adult unemployment). Part of the problem stems from demographic shifts in the structure of the population and the fact that many of the jobs that formerly employed young people no longer exist. This contributes to social instability and governments should investigate how active labour is employed. Market policies can integrate young people and provide them with the competencies, skills and opportunities for decent and productive work.

Need to Reform Labour Market Institutions

Across the region insufficient attention has been given to the role of (weak) labour market institutions (LMI). This results in poor enforcement and limited social dialogue, which together constrains national efforts to promote decent work. LMIs cover a whole range of activities and services, including: employment services, career guidance, the provision of employability skills and information about employment opportunities. One of the most important constraints facing Asian labour markets is the lack of effective employment services, particularly in light of the decentralisation of policies and the handing down of power to provincial governments.

Good governance and transparent practices are a key priority for the effective implementation of policies at the decentralised level. With the increasing decentralisation of decision making processes, it is vital that local communities and other development partners play a more active role in the development and implementation of policies, enabling them to have a greater understanding of how public resources are linked to policy outcomes. Greater local flexibility is emerging as a key action for fostering innovation, entrepreneurship and local cohesion in local economic development. However, meeting local needs is still a challenging task requiring action in six domains:

- Injecting flexibility into the management of labour market policy;
- Establishing an overarching management framework which embeds local flexibility
- Building strategic capacity
- Building up local data and intelligence
- Improving partnership mechanisms
- Improving administrative processes.

Defining Skills Development

There is no universally accepted definition of skills development. It is context specific. However, there are a number of concepts, which have wide acceptability. Given the state of poverty situation in South Asian countries especially Bangladesh, and its ensuing challenges and constraints, a more holistic understanding of skills development is perhaps desirable. In this case, the definition by Kenneth King and Robert Palmer (January, 2006), can be useful in setting the tone of the study. Their definition of skills development is as follows:

‘Skills development is not equated with formal technical, vocational and agricultural education and training alone, but is used more generally to refer to the productive capacities acquired through all levels of education and training occurring in formal, non-formal and on-the-job

settings, which enable individuals in all areas of the economy to become fully and productively engaged in livelihoods, and to have the opportunity to adapt these capacities to meet changing demands and opportunities of the economy and labor market’.

Owing to the existing confusion in defining skills development, the experts are apparently trying to bring a large number of elements within the definition of skills development. It is apparent that the definition of skills development, not only refers to the elements, which skills development ought to deal with, rather it also deals with different mechanisms, through which, appropriate skills could be delivered.

General understanding about skills development among divergent partners

The overwhelming conviction among the various actors is that the skills development, in order to become effective, requires integration of many other skills like managerial skills, entrepreneurial skills, problem-solving skills, social skills etc. The majority view is that adequate and effective basic education is an essential condition for creating enabling conditions for the acquisition and application of skills development. It is also acknowledged that understanding market mechanisms and being able to deal with the market forces for income enhancement is an area that needs special attention. Some tend to argue that skills development for poverty reduction is one of the components within the wider vision of education. They are convinced that there should be an overwhelming concern for the comprehensive development within the context of the social and cultural heritage, replacing narrowed focus to poverty reduction only. The former is focused on achieving sustainable economic self-sufficiency, but by laying emphasis to community based training programs of national significance.

Understanding Generic Employability Skills

Generic employability skills comprise a set of ‘transferable’ skills independent of the occupational sectors and organizations in which individuals work, and which contribute to an individual’s overall employability by enhancing their capacity to adapt, learn and work independently. Put simply, generic employability skills are those that apply across a variety of jobs, organizations and sectors. They are also known by several other names, including key skills, core skills, essential skills, key competencies, transferable skills and employability skills. These skills are required not only to gain employment but also to progress within an organization.

While there is general agreement that generic employability skills are important (see below), there is no one definitive list of such skills.

- Fundamental skills – such as literacy, using numbers, technology skills
- People-related skills – such as communication skills, interpersonal skills, influencing skills,
- Negotiation skills, team working skills, customer service skills, and leadership skills.
- Conceptualising/thinking skills – such as managing information, problem solving, planning and organising skills, learning skills, thinking innovatively and creatively, and reflective skills.
- Personal skills and attributes – such as being enthusiastic, adaptable, motivated, reliable, responsible, honest, resourceful, committed, loyal, flexible, well presented, sensible, able to manage own time and deal with pressure.
- Skills related to the business world – such as innovation skills, enterprise skills, commercial awareness, business awareness.
- Skills related to the community – such as citizenship skills.

Although employability skills frameworks vary in terms of the particular skills and attributes they include, all major generic skills schemes include people-related skills and conceptualizing/thinking skills. Moreover recent lists of generic skills developed by employers have emphasized personal skills and attributes. Generic employability skills and attributes are context sensitive, which is to say they may vary in detail between different work contexts. Thus the demands for what might at first be assumed to be a generic skill (can) differ between sectors to an extent that matters. Think about the communication skills required of health workers compared to those retail employers expect - some common areas, some very different.

A further complicating factor is that individuals and organizations not only use different terms to refer to generic skills/attributes, but also give different meanings to seemingly identical terms, especially when referring to personal attributes. In the Center for Developing and Evaluating Life Long Learning (CDELL) study of the perceptions of generic employability skills in the South West of England, employers used over 30 different terms to identify personal attributes that they believed were required of young people in their organizations. This was due in part to their use of different terms to refer to the same attribute. Thus, for example, one employer used “time management” to refer to “coming to work on time” (even though this phrase is often used in a much wider sense), whereas other employers referred to this quality as “punctuality”. It should be noted, however, that even when employers used identical terms to identify personal attributes, they did not always define the attributes concerned in the same ways; for example, a nursing home employer defined “respect” in terms of respecting the privacy and dignity of patients, whereas a retailer defined respect in terms of politeness. Agreement on language and definitions is crucial to the development and implementation of generic employability skills programs. However, it is also important to recognize that there will probably never be one definitive list of generic skills because they need to be open to review and re-interpretation over time as working practices change.

Importance of Generic Employability Skills

Shifts in the economy, prompted by globalization, technological change, increased competitiveness, and the growing sophistication of customers and clients mean that employers are increasingly seeking generic skills alongside technical skills as a means of developing a workforce that is able to cope with:

- Increasingly complex work practices;
- Team working;
- Reduced supervision;
- Greater job flexibility and rotation;
- Increased interaction with consumers.

Generic employability skills are important because jobs today require flexibility, initiative and the ability to undertake many different tasks. They are not as narrowly prescribed and defined as in the past and generally they are more service oriented, making information and social skills increasingly important. Thus, for example:

- the increase in jobs in business, finance and retail sectors all require more staff with interpersonal skills – able to explain things and solve problems related to client needs;
- manufacturing workers are increasingly working in cells or teams and require more internal communication;
- craft workers are often working with more complex processes, which require greater thinking, reasoning and problem solving skills in order to operate machinery or deal with faults;

- decentralised supply chain management and systems integration require greater communication, team leadership, business and commercial awareness from all staff;
- The use of standardisation of computer based packages in many insurance, banking and call centres highlights the significance of communication skills and attitudes such as confidence, judgement and personal organisation.

Increasingly, employers look for an understanding of appropriate behavior and relationships in the workplace, self-management skills, team-working to solve problems, balancing group work with the ability to get on independently, and communication, including marshalling an argument and persuading others. Valued attributes include being able to work under pressure, commitment, dependability, imagination, creativity, getting on with people and willingness to learn.

Employers seek to recruit and retain employees with these skills; thus, education programs that emphasize such skills offer learners a comparative advantage in the labor market. Education providers are also interested in generic skills because they encourage learners to be more reflective and self directed.

The success of individuals and businesses in a knowledge driven economy will depend upon the skills, creativity and imagination of our people. Basic literacy, numeracy, specialist craft and technical skills remain vital, but today's economy increasingly demands people with high-level skills and ability to adapt quickly to changing requirements. Lifelong learning and continuous re-skilling are essential to enable people to cope with change, achieve security in their lives and benefit from growing prosperity.

Skills Development and Training: Concepts and Consequences

Any form of organized skills development initiative, invariably gets translated into training. Training could be provided both through formal, non-formal and informal mode of delivery. The formal training system is conceived, designed and implemented by the state. It usually sets standards, criteria and enforces them through statutory laws and regulations. The non-formal mode of training is also organized and semi structured mode of delivery. The informal mode of training is a self-generative process, which results from interactions and interdependence between individuals and groups. It is very personal in nature and also, is cost effective. With the broadening of the scope of skills development, the contents of training have also widened. Apart from acquiring technical know-how, training now a day, also embodies learning and skills acquisition through empowerment and capacity building. Skills development and training are also closely integrated or 'embedded' in a range of financial and non-financial interventions, which seek sustainable improvements in livelihoods of the poor. The bottom line is, 'training to overcome economic vulnerability' embraces a much wider set of skills than just conventional technical and managerial competencies. These include basic literacy and numeracy, social and political awareness and life skills.

Skills Mismatch: The Challenge

There is generally a mismatch between skills acquisition and business needs in the region. Skills development of the labour force requires an enabling environment so that the provision of skills is balanced with the provision of opportunities to use these skills. Therefore, skills development should be integrated with employment promotion for both the formal and informal private sector. In particular, international co-operation in developing an enabling environment for micro and small-enterprises is of critical importance. It is essential to examine the interaction between country approaches to skills development and country approaches skills utilisation. Past country experience suggest that training alone will, in most cases, result in disappointing employment outcomes.

The development trajectory followed by the South Asians provides some lessons on possible strategies for creating decent and productive employment. One of the central lessons to learn from is the need to put in place an industrial policy that targets growth in sectors that have employment potential. Once an industrial policy is in place it is easier for governments to ensure that a match is achieved between the demand and supply of skills. Unfortunately, defining what are the priority sectors for future development of skills is still a challenging task for many of the institutions and organisations working in the region.

Until the situation changes substantially, public-sector agencies will have to be the principal source of business development services and extension activities for domestic firms. However, public-sector is generally not very flexible or adaptable to changing needs. They also tend to be managed and delivered largely in a bureaucratic manner, and on a supply-driven basis. Furthermore, the inherent lack of financial resources and skilled human resources means that public provision is unlikely to be adequate, relative to needs. New and innovative modalities for the delivery of extension activities are needed. As far as possible, the main objectives should be substantive relevance and extensive outreach.

Furthermore, there is a need to raise the scale of training delivered (i.e. quantity) as well as the relevance of training to the demands of the private sector, the suitability of training for emerging categories of workers, such as women, and the certification of training where possible (i.e. quality). The decision to expand the provision of skills must take into account the capacity and potential capacity of public and private providers. In most countries across the region it would take five or more years to enable public Vocational Education and Training (VET) institutions to deliver skills that are attractive to employers. Under such circumstances it is necessary to investigate what role private providers and companies can play in expanding the supply of skills, as well as what incentives are required to encourage such provision.

Poverty Reduction through Skills

The target groups for poverty reduction/fighting against exclusion are: women, unemployed youth, people with disabilities, ethnic minorities, and people living in rural communities. Skills development activities refer here to life-skills based education; capacity-building in social sectors such as health; and training of disadvantaged groups in primary sectors such as agriculture, and entrepreneurship. Issues of integration of disadvantaged groups in the labour market through the provision of basic skills and training are a key priority for combating poverty but are insufficiently dealt with by educational institutions where resources have a greater focus on the most modern and formal sectors.

Migration and Mobility Represent both Challenges and Opportunities

Migration and mobility (both between and within countries) are driving the need for increased skills portability (transferability and recognition). There is increasing debate in both policy and academic literature about whether country specific New Qualification Frameworks (NQFs) for occupations are suitable for developing countries the dilemma still remains.

Industrial Fragmentation and Skills

There is an overall trend of industrial restructuring from manufacturing to service based economies. There is a high proportion of SMEs (Small and Medium Enterprises) in the region but often with a "missing middle", hollowness in the industrial structure where there is a lower-than-average presence of medium firms. SMEs outnumber large enterprises in South Asian countries in both the quantity of establishments and the share of labour force they employ.

An important limitation to SMEs development is the lack of agreement on the definition of SMEs and the lack of data and information on the SME sector which are not up-to-date across the region. The shortage of data is both acute and systemic and it has persisted despite the intrinsic importance of SMEs to South Asian economies and a renewed policy focus on them in recent years. Among other constraints are the difficulties to assess the state of skills in SMEs in the region and the strategies which need to be put in place to maintain and upgrade skills for competitiveness and innovation.

In a region where agricultural production is still very high, the declining importance of agriculture appears to reflect a trend towards modernisation in which countries move up the value-added chain into manufacturing and services. However, this is not necessarily a routine pattern of development. The declining importance of agriculture and the number of people employed in this sector can have serious implications for the South Asian region.

Lagging Entrepreneurial Development

Entrepreneurship development and managing skills (especially for SMEs) are needed across all industries. However, limited data is available on skills provision, increasing the challenge for policy design. Yet, there is evidence that training for workers in the informal economy on basic and generic skills (such as literacy and numeracy) as well as entrepreneurial skills (such as risk management, opportunity analysis) facilitate the transition from self-employment in the informal economy to micro-enterprise development in the formal economy. Across the region there is little emphasis on building up local capabilities for training in entrepreneurship development. In particular, financial capabilities of SMEs constitute one of the greatest challenges for this sector to survive through the economic crisis and therefore it is a key skill to be developed in OECD and non OECD countries.

Barriers in Promoting Employability Skills

In the pre-16 education system common barriers to promoting employability skills revolve around teacher skills, knowledge and confidence and competition from other initiatives and aspects of the curriculum. Though not focused on employability skills per se, research has suggested that strategies to encourage cognitive development in the early years may have been hampered by other pressures to broaden the scope of learning. Equally in secondary schools the number and range of initiatives and programs is bewildering, especially when issues not covered here such as building and capital modernization are included, alongside frequent changes in qualifications structures, staffing structures, behavior and attendance management programs, and new curricula – progressively and continually raise standards across other subjects. In school settings the traditional divide between academic and vocational subjects may have led to employability skills being seen as a concern only for low achievers, leading to them missing from some classes and devalued in others.

Although covering a range of countries and sectors, it is possible to identify themes for best practice, even if hard measures of their success are not available. These include:

- Work-based learning and work-related learning which both make an important contribution to the development of employability skills.
- Experiential / action learning, with their more informal, flexible, student-centred approaches.
- ‘Student autonomy’ and self-directed learning through individualised pathways and activities where students exercise choice and take decisions for themselves.
- Promoting reflection on experience and practice – reflexive learning – is critical to ensuring integration of knowledge and understanding. A process for demonstrating this, whether through

presentations, e-portfolios, or personal development plans, may be related to an overall mapping of employability skills.

- Multi-interventions at each stage of engagement, use of multiple models of learning, taking a holistic approach.
- Employer engagement and involvement in design and delivery, including assessment, design, expert panel.

Informed Considerations

Plethora of initiatives have been undertaken to develop skills, whether at national, regional, institutional, department or individual level. These need encouragement, through a process which engages key stakeholders and elicits their support. This may require clear messages tailored to different groups as to why this is important to them and what needs to be done, with how they can implement and embed in their respective sector or area. Developing partnership and collaboration in skill development, in order to build and sustain closer relationships with stakeholders especially employers, recognizing that there may be transferable effective engagement practices from employers. Specific barriers need to be understood at different levels for different sectors (as well as how they have been overcome where there is best practice) in order to tailor interventions to address these. Good research will help understand the skill gaps, skill needs and emerging demands with respect to region, sector and gender.

SECTION III: SIGNALS FROM THE EMPLOYERS

Education and skill development are two of the major drivers of any economy. The recent focus on skill development and education has brought the skill gap that labor market is facing into the focus. The following sections discuss the findings of the field research undertaken in three South Asian countries namely, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. These three countries are not only neighbors but also share a very strong similarity in terms of its culture, society, and to a large extent in terms of the economy. The economies are growing and are under the strong grip of liberalization and globalization policies.

The two greatest concerns of employers today are finding good workers and training them. The difference between the skills needed for the job and those possessed by the applicant is called the skill gap, which is of real concern to the human resource managers and business operators looking to hire competent employees. Most discussions concerning today's workforce eventually turn to employability skills, or job readiness skills that help individuals fit into and remain in the world of work. Employers need reliable, responsible workers who can solve problems and who have the social skills and attitude to work together as team members. Creativity, once a trait avoided by employers who used a cookie cutter system, is now prized among employers, who are trying to create an empowered, high performance worker needed for today's competitive market. Therefore, employable skills can be summed as 'skill attitudes and actions that enable high performance along with team synergy to make sound and critical decisions'. Unlike occupational or technical skills employability skills are generic in nature rather than job specific and cut across all industry types, business sizes and job levels from entry level worker to the senior most position. Employability skills can be broadly classified as cognitive, non-cognitive and technical skills.

Indian Landscape

With liberalization and opening up of the Indian market coupled with globalization, demand for new and enhanced skills has gone up. Though Indian education system creates a large number of professionals, but many studies have shown that their employability in the labor market is low (NASSCOM-McKinsey Report). Investment in education and skill development has also increased over the decades. However, this increased investment has proved to be inadequate in addressing the need of the growing economy.

India is a country with diverse culture, society, political development and most importantly a very diverse economic development scenario. The regional disparity in economic development has been very stark and led to a rural –urban migration, the mega cities being the main pulling factor. Unemployment of the educated youth and poverty are the main push factors in this outward urban centric migration. Given the diversity of economic development, the present study is based on three regions of the country: Western, Northern and Central India. The following representative cities were chosen for the study: Delhi (Northern Region), Mumbai (western Region) and Bhopal (Central Region). The choice for these three cities was based upon the population size and the availability of recruiters across sectors. All the three cities are classified as Class I cities by the Census of India, 2011. Delhi is the administrative capital (X Category) of the country, while Mumbai serves as the commercial capital (X Category). Bhopal (B1 Category) is the state capital of Madhya Pradesh and has been the center of many industries.

Three cities in India i.e. New Delhi, Mumbai and Bhopal and one each in Pakistan and Bangladesh i.e. Lahore and Dhaka respectively were identified for meeting the industry people for focus group discussion. However, focus group discussion as a methodology has its limitation of factoring in only the perceptions, opinions and beliefs of the participants. The following anchor themes were floated for the discussions on skills for employability among school pass outs:

- The process of recruitment
- Identification and selection of right candidate
- Process of focusing on the skill requirement
- The skill gaps in the current scenario
- Support required by the industry from educational institutes
- Educational and training gaps both general and specific
- Provision of on the job training
- Listing of skill requirement category wise
- Perception of school skills
- State supports required.
- Suggestion for strengthening skills requirement

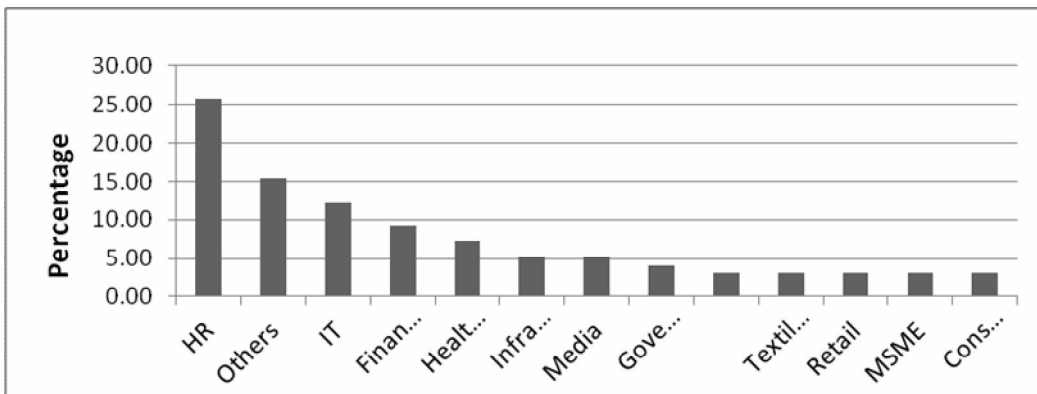
The focus group discussion was divided into two technical sessions following from Inaugural and background of the study. The two technical sessions revolved around the following four major themes related to skill development.

- Perception of skills
- Requirement of generic skills
- Possibility of skill generation at school level
- Sector specific skill gaps

Major Industrial Players in the Contemporary Economy

For the analysis of skill needs and skill gaps some of the major high growth sectors have been identified on the basis of their relative importance in the regional economy. There were 97 participants across five cities and three countries, which are represented in the following diagram:

Figure: FGD Participants: Sector-wise



New Delhi: The Administrative Capital

With a high population density New Delhi is not only a class I city but also features as a Alpha City due to its market size as well as due to its important role in all aspects of human endeavor. The metropolis of Delhi is the second most populous in India, the tenth most populous city in the world. It is the seventh biggest agglomeration in the world. The metropolis has the highest urban spread in the country with the total area of 1482 square kilometer. New Delhi being the administrative capital with high employment opportunities across sector was selected for the first focus group discussion. New Delhi is the seat of executive, legislative and judiciary power of the government. The gross state domestic product (GSDP) of Delhi, at current prices for the year 2011-12, has been estimated at Rs. 3.13 lakh Crores. Delhi is the largest economic hub in north India. As per the Economic survey of Delhi (2005-2006), the tertiary sector contributes 70.95per cent of Delhi's gross SDP followed by secondary and primary sectors, with 25.20per cent and 3.85per cent contribution, respectively. Delhi's workforce constitutes 32.82per cent of the population showing an increase of 52.52per cent between 1991 and 2001. Delhi's unemployment rate decreased from 12.57per cent in 1999–2000 to 4.63per cent in 2003. In December 2004, 636,000 people were registered with various employment exchange programs in Delhi.

Till recently the total workforce in all government (union and state) and quasi-government sector was 620,000. In comparison, the organised private sector employed approximately 219,000 persons. Key service industries include information technology, telecommunications, hotels, banking, media and tourism. Delhi's manufacturing industry has also grown considerably as many consumer goods industries have established manufacturing units and headquarters in and around Delhi. Delhi's large consumer market, coupled with the easy availability of skilled labour, has attracted foreign investment in Delhi. In 2001, the manufacturing sector employed 1,440,000 workers while the number of industrial units was 129,000. Construction, power, telecommunications, health and community services, and real estate form integral parts of Delhi's economy. Delhi has India's one of the largest and fastest growing retail industries.

The focus group discussion in Delhi was organized in collaboration the Progress Harmony and Development Chamber of Commerce (www.phdcci.in) on 30th April, 2012. The discussion held in Delhi clearly pointed out that the skills required for this ever growing economy is much greater than what is available in the market. The greater share of the service sector in Delhi's economy clearly depicts its need for a skilled human resource that requires both basic as well as technical skills. Soft skills are the driving force for the economy. The New Delhi Discussions clearly pointed out the inadequacy of these skills in the market.

Indian employment exchange is the agency that registers the employable youth of the country for employment and brings out the advertisements of the jobs. The Exchange is responsible for meeting the labor market demand. During the group discussion many inadequacies of the Employment Exchange emerged. The exchange and its activities were critiqued on the following grounds:

Ineffective Delivery

As the employment exchanges in India, where people register themselves to find jobs the main date of the organization was to employ the labor force in both private and public sector. However, over the time it was noticed that it was only calling for the government sector. There appeared a clear gap between the demand and the supply of workforce even in this sector. Such limitations are detrimental to the individual as well as the labor market, which in the current scenario was functioning as a monopolistic market.

Limited Outreach

Since the employment exchanges catered only to specific sectors it was unable to attract potential talents from for the other sectors, thereby putting its existence into question. Even in the government sector most of the departments have been organizing their own recruitment processes instead of drawing the potential labor force from the Exchange. At the same time, the private sector is completely ignored.

Moreover, the employment exchanges depend more on paper qualifications instead of focusing on the actual skill sets the individuals possessed. Hence, the activities of the exchange were not taken seriously both by the employer and employee. The information lag between the stakeholders further worsened the situation.

During the Discussion it was agreed upon that a fresh labor market information system is indispensable to take care of all the inadequacy of the current available structures. Unpacking the skill sets and organizing them for the sector specific markets will give leverage to the potential job seekers. They may operate as a monophony and offer their services as an organized whole to enhance their employability in the labor market. The skill basket will take care of the employer's needs and the skilled labor workforce will be optimally and gainfully utilized. Thus collective bargaining and marketing will send strong signals to the labor market and bridge the demand supply gap. The discussion also brought out some of the major problems in the skill development in India, both at employer and employee level. These problems are highlighted and discussed below.

Teacher Training

Teacher Training for skill development was seen as a major hurdle. Although subjects enhancing skill sets among students are now in demand and are growing phenomenally at school level but the output from such subjects suffer due to lack of trained teachers. The pedagogy of the Skill development courses is completely different as they are more practical orientation than other courses. Teachers need special training for such transactions. There seems to be a huge lag between demand and supply for such training needs. Skill teaching should be more practical and output oriented. Such training initiatives should be linked to the industry so that the student can be mentored during the "on-the-job-training". Teaching itself suffers due to low hierarchy syndrome. Not many students want to enter the teaching profession thereby giving it the double disadvantage of quality and quantity. Teacher competency should be enhanced by imbibing the communication skills and used 'project method' in teaching. Teacher exchange program may help in teacher improvement by providing different settings for self

reflection. In service teacher training should be at the centre stage for upgrading teacher's skills. Training should largely be industry driven so as to dovetail education and industry.

Gender Bender

With increasing enrolment of women at all stages of education, stereotyped gender notions are decreasing in the labor market. Most employers' perceived women as better multitasked, efficient, flexible and sincere. ICT sector is a great enabler for women. This sector has allowed women to work from home and flexi timing allowing women to have work life balance. However, the dual responsibility of working and managing homes leads to compromises on employment front, thereby making them susceptible to underemployment. Even their safety and security issues make their choices narrow in terms of employment opportunity. The women are gradually breaking the glass ceiling and are entering new and more challenging occupational terrains.

Skill Appreciation

Good Role models in terms of quality and quantity need to be highlighted so that young generation is inspired enough to emulate them. Such initiative can bridge the knowledge skill divide. For example, the developed world pays very high salaries to crane operators and train drivers. Such examples enumerate the importance of skill sets, which are highly employable with commiserating salaries. A worker with the right skill sets has the potential to overtake contemporary employee who do not possess the same. Thus the 'overtaking criterion' used as a logic to make a choice for higher education in spite of having huge opportunity cost can be analogically used in skill development also.

Need Assessment of Skills

The industry requirement of skills needs to be enunciated and articulated to that the penumbra of ambiguity around them is dissipated. There have been no substantial initiatives in this regard. An industry wise survey of skill requirement for different level is an imperative. Such measures, along with certification will help skill development in the right direction at an early stage. Simultaneously, it will help the industry in recruiting the right candidate for a right job.

Skill Requirements: Expectations from the Industry

Apart from these lacunas in the skill development sector, the Focus group discussion brought to the table many skills that are highly hunted for by the industry. The following are the skills that every industry regardless of the sector require in an employee and expects in a 10+2 pass out. These skills are the common, basic, generic skills and are apart from the industry specific skills required.

Critical Thinking

Critical thinking has been described as "reasonable reflective thinking focused on deciding what to believe or do." It has been described in more detail as "the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action".

Core critical thinking skills include observation, interpretation, analysis, inference, evaluation, explanation, and meta-cognition. There is a reasonable level of consensus among experts that an individual or group engaged in strong critical thinking gives due consideration to evidence through observation; context; relevant criteria for making the judgment well; applicable methods or techniques

for forming the judgment; applicable theoretical constructs for understanding the problem and the question at hand. However, the employers felt that there is a lack of critical thinking on the part of the employee and attributed this problem to the Indian education system which is much more colonial and does not leave any scope for the children to develop adequate critical thinking.

Leadership

Leadership has been described as a process of social influence in which one person can enlist the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a common task. The leader may or may not have any formal authority. Students of leadership have produced theories involving traits, situational interaction, function, behavior, power, vision and values, charisma, and intelligence, among others. Somebody whom people follow; somebody who guides or directs others.

Communication

Communication enables a person to convey information to be received and understood. It is the ability to use language (receptive) and express (expressive) information. Communication skills are generally understood to be the art or technique of persuasion through the use of oral and written language. To understand the basic of communication skills, one need to understand that communication is one of those words that is most hyped in contemporary culture. It includes a large number of experiences, actions and events; also a variety of happening and meanings, as well as technologies.

Analytical Skills

Analytical skill is the ability to visualize, articulate, and solve both complex and uncomplicated problems and concepts and make decisions that are based on available information. Such skills include demonstration of the ability to apply logical thinking to gathering and analyzing information, designing and testing solutions to problems, and formulating plans.

To test for analytical skills one might be asked to look for inconsistencies in an advertisement, put a series of events in the proper order, or critically read an essay. Usually standardized tests and interviews include an analytical section that requires the examiner to use their logic to pick apart a problem and come up with a solution.

Although there is no question that analytical skills are essential, other skills are equally required as well. For instance in systems analysis the systems analyst should focus on four sets of analytical skills: systems thinking, organizational knowledge, problem identification, and problem analyzing and solving. It also includes the way we describe a problem and subsequently find out the solutions.

Mumbai: The Financial Capital

Mumbai is the capital of the Indian State of Maharashtra. It is the most populous city in India. It also serves as an economic hub of India, contributing 10per cent of factory employment, 25per cent of Individual output, 33per cent of income tax collection, 60per cent of customs duty collection, 20per cent of central Excise tax collection, 40per cent of India's foreign trade and 4000 crore in corporate taxes. Being situated in the mineral rich zone Mumbai has been the hub of industries offering employment to a large number of populations. State and Central government employees make up a large percentage of the city's workforce. Most of India's major television and satellite networks as well as major publishing houses. Bollywood is the largest film producer in the world. The port and shipping industry is well established, with Mumbai Port being one of the oldest and most significant ports in India. Five of the fortune Global 500 companies are based in Mumbai. Many foreign brands and

financial institutions also have branches in Mumbai with the World Trade Centre being the most prominent.

Being the economic hub of the country, the study could bring together a lot many diverse respondents from diverse industrial backgrounds, with the support of Kherwadi social welfare organization (www.yuvaparivartan.org) on 24th May, 2012.

Major Takeaways from Mumbai

On the Job Training

All the employers felt that on the job training is non-negotiable. When a learner enters the labor market her/his skills get honed by on the job training. The learner gets the real feel of the work where her/his potential is actualized and manifested. It is here that the theory and practice get twined up and create synergy for the output. A few months on the job training at entry level is an imperative.

Dignity of Labor

Skill development requires dignity of labor where the hegemony and hierarchy of superior and inferior skill sets or the dichotomy between the skills and knowledge get eroded. There is a need to create the mentality among the employer, employee and other stakeholders about the equality of skills and their importance at the time of learning and also when it gets pegged in the labor market .This change has to come not only from learners and the employers but should be high on the agenda of social change.

Market Based Solution

The market is seen as the benchmark for making all changes backwards, such approach will bring about both internal as well as external efficiency in the system. The forward and backward linkages will be barrier free and will enhance employability of the candidates who will possess appropriate skill set required by the labor market. Both education and employment will be compatible with each other.

Capacity Building

Capacity building in public private partnership mode, with the help of all the stakeholders, has to come together on a common platform. Such initiative will enhance the productivity of the partners as well as the learner's. The learners will be able to best position themselves in the labor market by learning about and developing skill sets useful for both public and private sector. The partnership will broaden the base of choices available to the potential candidates at the entry level.

Emerging Avenues

The service sector is fast growing in India and therefore we need to identify emerging needs of this sector like health, beauty and spa and skill our labor force accordingly. The emerging needs of the labor market need to be addressed by focusing on skill sets for the new openings.

Education-Industry Link

Education and industry should not be in isolation. In fact both complement each other. Good education and skills lead to higher productivity in the world of work. Such productivity will lead to higher GDP and which in turn will aid national development. A well established link between the two will infuse a

good economic sense among the learners and will lead to entrepreneurial skill development among them.

Teacher Training

Teacher training for skill development again surfaced as a critical issue. Unless and until a teacher is able to transact effectively, the learning is negatively impacted. Quality education for skill development can only flourish with quality teachers in the system. Teachers also play the role of an inspirational leader, who can have lasting impact on the impressionable minds of the school children.

Valid Certification

Standard certification at National or even regional (south level) will increase the employability of the young entrants. It will boost their confidence, infuse bargaining strength in the labor market and provide them national and international outreach. This is an absolute must as quality certification will enable gainful employability in the labor market.

Skill Requirements

Apart from this institutional lacuna in the skill development sector, the following **skill sets** were brought to the table and given high priority during the Mumbai round table.

Aptitude

Natural ability or skill at doing something or some job

3R's-Reading, Writing and Arithmetic

The three R's are the foundations of a basic skills oriented education program within schools, reading, writing and Arithmetic.

Appearance and Personality

Personality is the particular combination of emotional, attitudinal, and behavioral response patterns of an individual. It refers to individual differences in characteristic pattern of thinking, feeling, and behaving.

Diligence & hard working

The ability to do careful and thorough work. It implies to be able to do a lot of work into a job and doing it well.

Influencing skills

The influencing skills would have an effect on the way that somebody behaves or thinks, also by giving them an example to follow.

Multitasking

The ability to do several things at the same time

Willingness to Learn

Being willing to learn allows one to pick up the techniques needed in order to work properly, and when the job environment changes, it can be beneficial to willingly change and accommodate the self to new business methods.

Problem solving

Problem solving is the ability of finding ways of dealing with a problem and finding solutions.

Bhopal: The State Capital

Bhopal is the capital of the Indian state of Madhya Pradesh. It is located in central India. It is a Class I city, a classification on population and a B-1 Category city on the basis of cost of living. Bhopal houses various institutions of national importance such as BHEL (Bharat Heavy Electrical Limited, a unit of the largest engineering and manufacturing enterprise in India in Bhopal), Railway Recruitment Board, Service Selection Board and National Vocational Institute (NCERT) a few to name. The major industries in the old city are of electrical goods, medicinal cotton, chemicals and jewellery. Other industries include flour milling, cloth weaving, painting, match making, sealing wax and sports equipment. The town is also home to Hindustan Electro Graphite (HEG) owning the largest graphite electrode plant in the world. Most of the recruitments in the government sector in Bhopal happen through centralized systems like UPSE, SSC etc. Besides the major recruiters the industry houses such as printing were open to all learners who were physically capable of undertaking the assigned work. In fact, informal network played a critical role in making available new entrants. This ensured that the new entrant was suitable, informal and had the readiness to join the workforce. Such critiques led to segmentation in the labor market and ensured specialization among the group member through peer learning. Being at the heart of India with such diverse sectors, it was decided to hold our second focus group discussion with the industries in Bhopal. The focus group discussion in Bhopal was held on 7th May, 2012 in collaboration with the Bhopal management association (www.bmabhupal.org) to rope the industry HR personnel's from Central India.

Major Takeaways from Bhopal

Indian Railways is the largest recruiter and has 4 Boards all over India. It is called the Railway Recruitment Board (RRB). RRB calls for eligible applicants through "Employment News" (A publication of the Government of India). The applications are scrutinized for eligibility and the eligible candidates are called for a written examination. If number of candidates is large, the candidates who qualify in the preliminary exam are called for the main written exam, and the merit list is prepared based entirely upon the result of the main exam. In most categories of jobs, there is no interview after the written examination. For a very few specific categories there is a viva after the written exam, while for certain other categories there is a skill test like typing test or stenography test. For categories related to operational safety like Asst. Station Master, Asst. Loco Pilot, there will be an aptitude test. The application details furnished by successful candidates are verified and they are called for counselling and scrutiny of original documents. A panel of names is then recommended to Zonal Railways to the extent of vacancies. The candidates will be required to pass a medical examination conducted by the Railways before appointment. The entire recruitment system is computerised and functions impersonally without fear or favour. There is no scope for corruption, influence or discretion in this process. Candidates indulging in malpractices and unfair means are dealt with strictly.

Service Selection Board

10 + 2 Technical Entry Scheme

Under this scheme, candidates with 10+2 qualification, after selection through SSB, is sent for military and engineering training at IMA and the College of Military Engineering, Pune. Initial six months military training is followed by Degree Engineering training of 4 years. The objective of this scheme is to help in bringing down the deficiency of officers in technical Arms/Services.

Recruitment through the UPSC

The UPSC holds an all-India competitive examination, known as the Combined Defence Services Examination (CDSE), twice a year. University graduates are eligible to appear in the examination. Successful candidates join the respective training academies, viz., the Indian Military Academy (IMA) for the Army, the Naval Academy for the Navy and the Air Force Academy for the Air Force. The UPSC also holds, twice a year, an examination for entry into the National Defence Academy (NDA). Candidates on completion of the 10+2 Examination or while in the 12th standard are eligible to compete in this examination. Successful candidates thereafter join the NDA. On completion of the NDA course, they are sent to the respective service academies for their pre-commission training.

Recruitment of Jawans through Open Recruitment Rallies

A new system of recruitment has been introduced with effect from April 01, 1998. Under the revised system, recruitment of *jawans* in the Army is carried out through open recruitment rallies only. Recruitment rallies are planned well in advance, keeping in view the geographical, demographical and topographical considerations. At least one such rally is held in each month, combining districts, areas and regions, depending upon the response anticipated, thereby giving every aspirant, irrespective of his place of residence, minimum one opportunity in a year to get himself enrolled in the Army. In the old system of Branch Recruiting Office-oriented recruitment, aspirants had to travel long distances to reach the nearest BRO for enrolment, whereas in the revised system, recruitment has been brought closer to their area of domicile. Advance publicity regarding an ensuing rally in a particular area/district is given by putting up hoardings, advertisement in local newspapers, radio etc.

Besides the major recruiters the industry houses such as printing were open to all learners who were physically capable of undertaking the assigned work. In fact, informal network played a critical role in making available new entrants. This ensured that the new entrant was suitable, informal and had the readiness to join the workforce. Such critiques led to segmentation in the labor market and ensured specialization among the group member through peer learning.

Starting Afresh

Some employers perceived that the current system of skill enrichment and development needs fresh thinking and initiative, which can be brought about through a bottom-up approach. A patchwork approach in repairing the system may not yield the desired results; therefore, a new system needs to be developed to cater to the skill needs of the labor market.

Need For Quality Teachers

Teacher is central to all knowledge and skill development. The quantity of teachers has impacted both quality and quantity of the workforce. The upfront and silent impact of the teacher last a life time thus, we need to enhance the teacher quality at all levels of general and vocational education.

Education, Training and Manpower

Education fructifies in the labor market. Therefore, a sound foundation at an early stage helps build a strong manpower for the nation. The purpose of education is also to bring about social changes by making a dent at the established structures of hierarchies and exclusion. The dichotomy between general and vocational education can be bridged by introducing both vertical and horizontal mobility in the system. Credit based skill driven courses should be available for auditing so as to infuse seriousness among the learners.

Employability Indicators

Drawing from the international experience some countries have built employability indicators, which help the learner to assimilate the market driven needs for skill development. Countries like Malaysia, Australia etc. have classified communication skills, teamwork, leadership and competency as the basic skills indispensable for the labor market. However, Australia also focuses on entrepreneurship and self management, while United States dwelled upon development activities. Such an exercise in development of the indicators will help clear the cobwebs that entangle the link between education and employments making the transition to the world of work seamless.

Skill Requirements: The Industry Expectations

The following skill sets emerged as essentials for industry from an employment perspective.

Quest for knowledge

Quest for knowledge teaches and encourages a person to find information for them, so that they can independently seek answers and solutions making the learning permanent for life.

Good Communication Skill

Since the world is so incredibly diverse and communications come in such a wide variety of forms, it is important to know appropriate and helpful interpersonal skills. Good communication skills involve speaking and listening; communication is not a one-way street. It involves being speaker and audience simultaneously. It involves appreciating the dynamism of human encounters, according to which things are always in motion, always changing. Hence, communication skills are considered to be important by the employers as its affects not only the day to day activities of the workplace but also help in growth and development.

Habit

The habit–goal interface is constrained the particular manner in which habits are learned and represented in memory. Specifically, the associative learning underlying habits is characterized by the slow, incremental accrual of information over time in procedural memory. Habits can either benefit or hurt the goals a person sets for themselves. Goals guide habits most fundamentally by providing the initial outcome-oriented impetus for response repetition. In this sense, habits often are a vestige of past goal pursuit.

Teamwork and social interaction

Teamwork is defined in Webster's New World Dictionary as "a joint action by a group of people, in which each person subordinates his or her individual interests and opinions to the unity and efficiency of the group."

Values and Ethics

Ethical value denotes something's degree importance, with the aim of determining what action or life is best to do, or at least attempt to describe the value of different actions. It may be described as treating actions themselves as abstract objects, putting value to them. It deals with right conduct and good life, in the sense that a highly, or at least relatively highly, valuable action or may be regarded as *good*, and an action of low, or at least relatively low, value may be regarded as *bad*.

Commitment and Dedication

Commitment is the willingness to work hard and give your energy and time to a job or activity. Dedication is the hard work and effort that somebody puts into an activity or purpose because they think it is important

Honesty

Honesty is the quality of being truthful.

Physical Fitness and stamina

Comprises two related concepts: general fitness (a state of health and well-being), and specific fitness (a task-oriented definition based on the ability to perform specific aspects of sports or occupations). Physical fitness is generally achieved through correct nutrition, exercise and enough rest.

Positive Thinking and Attitude

Positive thinking is a mental attitude that admits into the mind thoughts, words and images that are conducive to growth, expansion and success. It is a mental attitude that expects good and favourable results.

Time Management

It is the act or process of planning and exercising conscious control over the amount of time spent on specific activities, especially to increase effectiveness, efficiency or productivity. It may be aided by a range of skills, tools, and techniques used to manage time when accomplishing specific tasks, projects and goals complying with a due date. This set encompasses a wide scope of activities, and these include planning, allocating, setting goals, delegation, analysis of time spent, monitoring, organizing, scheduling, and prioritizing.

Flexibility and Adaptability

It is the ability to be responsive to change or the ability to change (or be changed) to fit changed circumstances

Quick responsiveness

Is to readily react to suggestions, influences, appeals, or efforts quickly

Table: Comparative pictures of city-wise skill gaps in India

Delhi	Mumbai	Bhopal
Critical Thinking	Aptitude	Quest for knowledge
Leadership	3R's	Good Communication Skill
Communication	Appearance and Personality	Teamwork and social interaction
Analytical Skills	Diligence & hard working	Time Management
	Influencing skills	Quick responsiveness
	Multitasking	Positive Thinking and Attitude
	Willingness to Learn	Values and Ethics
	Problem solving	Honesty, Commitment and Dedication
		Habit
		Flexibility and Adaptability
		Physical Fitness and stamina

The above table shows that the skill requirements of the employers in these three regions of the country are quite different. The population composition and the regional differences in the economic activities are key reasons to such a difference. Delhi being the capital city has always been able to attract the most up to date population from the different corners of the country. This population has strong inter-personal and personal skills. Hence, Delhi's requirements are much more towards generic skills. Being the center of the Hindi belt communication in English is the major problem. Given the globalised scenario of the labor market, English is the main medium of instruction and communication now-a-days and hence, the call for better communication skills.

Mumbai, on the other hand, looks for more personal traits. Popularly known to be the tough city, Mumbai calls for perseverance, hard working willingness to learn etc. Similarly, Bhopal also calls for personal traits as well as inter personnel skills. As we proceed hierarchically from Delhi to Bhopal via Mumbai we observe the growing need for differentiated generic skills required by the employers. Thus the differences in the skill requirements in these regions can be attributed to the regional differences in the economic, social and cultural makeup.

Sectoral Analysis of Skills Gaps in India

Some of the major high growth sectors identified by the Planning Commission have been analyzed for skill gaps in India. India, being the largest and influential economy of the region, is perceived to be reflective of all other economies and their future economic direction. The major sectors analyzed here

are: automobile industry, banking and finance, infrastructure, textile industry, Information technology, health care, media etc.

On the face of global economic slowdown, the Indian economy displayed remarkable resilience partly because of its strong domestic fundamentals like demand, and investment. Banking and finance sector has been growing at a faster rate posing challenges in the area of human resource management. The sector is dominated by both public and private players. The challenges in terms of Human Resource Management are faced at every stage starting from identification, recruitment, training, shaping, motivating and also in retaining the personnel. While employees are looking forward to higher level jobs, finding workforce for the lower level staff is very difficult. Infrastructure is the backbone of any economy. Infrastructure development has been the focus of the Indian planned development process. Infrastructure, along with power, constitutes the core of the economy. Textile is one of the basic industries on India the growth of which can be traced back to pre-independence era. Textile industry has found its place in all the five year plans of India mostly due to its employment and export generative capacity. However, its highly disintegrated nature puts the industry in a disadvantageous position. Textile industries in India are highly localized and are governed by the availability of raw materials and water. It is a highly labor intensive industry and women constitute a major chunk of the work force.

In the service sector, the Indian IT sector has extensively contributed towards a consistent growth of the national economy helping India stand out in the global scenario. Projected to become a \$225 billion industry by 2020, the industry has become one of the growth drivers for the economy generating employment, increasing standard of living and promoting diversity. The growth of the industry is defined and driven by a high caliber and highly talented human resource pool. Health care is a growing industry with rapid privatization. Health tourism has become important and prominent in national economies. But a close look into the industry provides us inputs on shortage of personnel, regional and caste -class disparity. Hospitality and travel is one of the growing sectors of Indian economy with a compound annual growth rate of 16.1per cent. Travel and tourism is the second largest foreign exchange earner for Indian economy. The tourism industry also provides employment to millions of people both directly and indirectly through its linkages with other sectors of the economy.

Automobile sector

Automobile sector is one of the fast growing sectors of Indian economy. It registered a higher growth rate post liberalization of the economy. Today it contributes nearly 5per cent to the country's GDP and approximately 18per cent to indirect taxes, with an investment outlay of over Rs. 83,500 crore (2008-09). The Industry with its both forward and backward linkages provides more indirect employment than direct employment to the work force. Due to its very nature, the growth of the automobile industry has happened in clusters which can be divided into three major regions:

- Western Region (Mumbai – Pune – Nasik – Aurangabad)
- Southern Region (Chennai – Bangalore – Hosur) and
- Northern Region (Delhi – Gurgaon – Faridabad).

In the eastern region, Jamshedpur and Kolkata are major centers of growth.

Due to the forward and backward linkages as mentioned earlier and due to the growth of the allied services the employment generated by the industry can be divided into direct and indirect employment. Direct employment includes personnel working with automobile manufacturing and mechanics and auto component manufacturers (about 30per cent to 40per cent). Indirect employment includes personnel working in the enabling industries, such as vehicle finance and insurance industry, vehicle

repair, vehicle service stations, vehicle maintenance, vehicle and component dealers, drivers, cleaners etc (about 60 per cent to 70 per cent). Though the availability of personnel in this industry in terms of numbers is not an issue, but finding quality personnel for employment, both in terms of knowledge & skills appropriately matched to the requirements of the automobile industry in India has proved to be painstaking.

During the interaction with the industry as part of the Primary Research, requirement of skills at various functional levels across the core segments and the enabler segments were analyzed. The interactions with the industry personnel held in the study area brought out that the skill requirements for the indirect employments in the enabler segment is more of soft skills blended with basic understanding of how a car functions. On the other hand, when it comes to the core segment the requirement is for technical skills. The skills required by the industry can be divided into three types: service, mechanics, and manufacturing skills.

The main skills required by the service segment are basic literacy, analytical ability and ability to understand and follow shop floor instructions, relevant knowledge of working of car systems, ability to operate and/or maintain both general and special machines, ability to adhere to Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for all variants / versions on a single platform / across platforms, ability to carry out basic trouble shooting of machines in case of breakdown, ability to perform operations requiring multiple skills, ability to minimize wastage of raw materials and consumables, maximize production and understand the corresponding impact on cost, quality and time; ability to highlight aberrations in daily production processes; adherence to required quality levels of production; ability to understand and follow instructions from supervisors, shop heads, plant head etc.; ability to understand and conform to basic shop floor safety practices such as wearing gloves when handling cast parts, being aware of dangers of interfering with machine/ equipment, etc. Knowledge of assembly line operations, quality management techniques, fabrication techniques, welding techniques, cutting, machining, etc.; understanding of drawings, knowledge of usage of instruments, measurement techniques and maintaining tolerances Knowledge of principles of manufacturing such as lean manufacturing, managing safety at work, have complete knowledge of / be adept in a particular trade (e.g. painting, fitting, welding, etc.); ability to conform to work schedules and complete the assigned work on time Ability to maintain discipline at the shop floor, punctuality and regular attendance at workplace leading to lack of standardization in the people available in this cadre is a concern.

However, the major skill gaps identified by the industry are tendency to consider only the current activity (say, tightening a bolt) being performed, no understanding of where the activity fits into the big picture; inadequate trade knowledge and poor application of the available trade knowledge – this can be attributed to the fact that institutions such as ITIs do not teach skills specific to the Automotive Industry (for example, the ‘fitter trade is generic); inadequate desire for learning new skills / working on new machines – this also stems from the weak understanding and lack of comfort with latest machines; unavailability of drivers, painters and operators for high-tech machines (such as super-finishing grinding machines and other CNC controlled machines) is a concern; Insufficiency in communicating problems faced during the daily routine – this in turn affects quality and can lead to time and cost overruns ; Tendency to form unions and disrupt regular working – this is especially true for the permanent (on rolls)

unionized employees; Insufficient understanding of discipline, industrial rules, work related procedures ; Absenteeism is a concern in this cadre; Lack of skill standardization across educational institutes, leading to lack of standardization in the people available in this cadre is a concern.

In the Vehicle manufacturing sector mainly technical skills are required. This sub-sector demands an understanding of the machine parts, ability to understand large parts in operation while ensuring safety through out the process. However, the industry finds it difficult to find these skills and feel that there is no adequate orientation towards the safety measures and features of handling equipment used in operations.

The third set of skills required in this sector is in the area of mechanics. The skills required are much more technical than needed in the manufacturing area. It demands in dept understanding of the assemblies, criticality of parts, critical assembly specifications and an ability to follow instructions given on job card. The main gaps in skills required and availability are very critical in this area. There appears to be basic lack of understanding of the parts, inadequate ability to discern minute differences in parts, inadequate orientation towards safety measures, tendency to rely on judgments than on instructions etc.

IT Sector

IT sector is another fast growing sector of Indian economy with its hub in major cities of the country. The sector is growing fast and the sector is surviving mostly on out sourcing. The major challenge that lies ahead is a creation of local market focus among the IT professionals. Software programme is another area of potential growth. The major functional skills required by the industry are ability to handle enquiries; Computer/key board skills; attention to details; Basic process knowledge and ability to provided technical support; ability to meet/ turn around time Requirements. Apart from these skills the industry banks on the soft skills of the personnel. However, at the industry faces with many skill gaps despite being having high growth rate. The major skill gaps identified by the employers of this sector can be divided into two types: functional skills, soft skills. The functional skill gaps are not very strong analytical ability, inadequate process compliance; Lack of attention to details; Lack of understanding of basic quality initiatives; Lack of understanding of information security and privacy issues. As the industry is yet to develop local markets and mostly does outsourcing job, hence soft skills are an asset for the industry. Desired soft skills by the industry include strong communication skills, aptitude for multi tasking, perseverance etc. The major skill gaps pointed out by the employers are in the area of communication, aptitude for multi tasking, perseverance, lack of attitude for problem solving.

Finance Sector

The Financing sector in India can be divided into three segments: Banking, Finance sector and Insurance mostly Mutual Funds), known as the BFSI Industry. In the face of the recent crisis in the global finance market India has remained the main driver, along with China, of the global economy with growth and progress. Banking & Financial system of the country plays a substantial role in promoting the long term growth of the economy. Apart from the on-roll employments, the sector provided a large number of contractual employments through various financial intermediaries like agents, advisers etc... These intermediaries are mostly involved in selling products of the respective industry segment.

Traditionally banking industry employs highly skilled people with specialized education qualification for most of its functions. However, over the last few years increasing outsourcing of some of the activities through DSAs has resulted in creation of employment opportunities in the form of customer care support and tele-marketing/ tele-sales persons for minimally educated people who were earlier not part of the banking system. These people are expected to possess good communication (spoken, written) skills, high level of perseverance, high energy level, emotional intelligence, and aptitude for

repetitive work, integrity and managing customer's expectations, understanding of the industry, knowledge of the product, awareness of asset classes, basic financial concepts etc.

The skill gaps identified in this sector mostly are related to the soft skills. In many cases, however, skill gaps are found in the lack of ability to comprehend the functioning of the industry. Moreover, low level of enthusiasm and emotional intelligence coupled by the insecurity of the job arising out of the contractual nature of employment plays an important role in creating the skill gaps.

Tourism

The tenth five year plan recognized the vast employment generation potential of the tourism sector and its potential role in socio-economic development. Hence, the Tenth Five year Plan and the subsequent Plans have focused on tourism and has included concerted effort in developing this sector. This service sector has helped the development of many other allied sectors. Among them hotel management and catering and hotel services are most important. The age group which is the focus of the study i.e. 18 years of age mostly is employed travel Counselors, Sales Executives and Messenger or delivery Boys. The profile of the people employed in this sector mostly the same. Apart from this many companies provide many other services like passport and visa services. Majority of the people in the specified as group are employed as Travel Counselors. The specific skills asked from the Counselors are an ability to understand the needs of the customer; ability to communicate effectively; knowledge of the geography, different foreign and domestic destinations and understanding of safety issues. However, the industry is suffering from acute shortage of the required skilled personnel. Major skill gaps are inadequate knowledge of the geography of destinations, communication skills and safety measures.

Employability skills are generally divided into three skill sets: basic academic skills, higher order thinking skills, and personal qualities. The cross-sectoral analysis of skills required shows that every sector has some basic skill requirements that include basic literacy, some specific skill sets which are very much industry specific and personal qualities which are common for all the industries. The basic skills include the reading, writing, math, communication, and listening which are necessary skills even at the entry level in any sector. The analysis shows that many of the sectors are experiencing the skill gap even for the basic and personal skills.

Employers also put importance on personal skills or qualities, because in most jobs, it is difficult to use workers effectively who lack personal skills. Some personal skills or qualities employers look for in employees include honesty, self-confidence, self-control, self-motivation, sociability, adaptability, integrity, punctuality, being well-groomed, cooperative and having good work ethics and team spirit

Infrastructure, Building Construction and Real Estate Sector

The size of the construction industry in India is 2.1 Trillion according to 2008 data. It is the second largest economic activity in India after agriculture providing employment to about 33 million people. The sector growing bigger over the years and as is attracting a large chunk of FDI. The FDI inflow during the year 2007-2008 has been calculated to be around Rs 240 billion. The construction industry can be divided into two segments: real estate and infrastructure. The real estate segments contribute 24per cent and infrastructure 76per cent of the entire Construction sector.

The construction industry employs 33 million people in India. Among these 30per cent are in the real estate segment and 70per cent are in the infrastructure segment. The bulk of the employees are unskilled laborers (82.5per cent), 10per cent are skilled laborers and the rest are engineers, technicians, foreman and clerical staff.

81 per cent of the total workforce in this industry are 10th pass or below and 13-14 per cent are trained in ITI and Vocational courses and are hired as trained workmen (NSDC Report).

The major skills expected from the trained workmen are ability to coordinate unskilled workmen, ability to operate key equipments, ability to work at heights, ability to deliver quality input, need to adapt, knowledge of construction specific areas, understanding of basic machine operations and troubleshooting, and basic knowledge of construction engineering. Though these skilled workmen are trained by the ITI and other vocational institutions, the industry felt that these skills are not quite readily available in the market. This many often leads to import of skilled man power from Middle East, south East Asian countries, china etc. The major skill gaps pointed out by our respondents are: inadequate knowledge of construction specific area, lack of knowledge of basic machine operations, inadequate ability to understand instructions. Many of the respondents attributed these skill gaps to the more-theoretical vocational training that the Indian institutions offer with no or very less practical training.

The skills expected out of the unskilled workmen are much more generic, oriented towards physical labor. The skills required are: ability to carry out operations like excavations, carrying, cutting, mixing etc. ability to do intensive manual labor thus, need to be medically fit, orientation towards safety measures, ability to take and execute instructions etc. The main skill gaps are very little safety orientation, inadequate workplace skills like discipline, cleanliness, inability to follow simple instructions, and low job loyalty.

The construction industry is growing at a faster rate and is in need of larger numbers of skilled and unskilled labor. Cross state migration is a common factor in this industry. Given the growing demand for human resources, it is necessary to develop the capabilities of the workforce and better and practical oriented training is the need of the hour.

Textile Industry

Indian textile and clothing sector is one of the important sectors in Indian economy in terms of output, foreign exchange earning and employment. Approximately 40 million people are employed in the textile industry which contributes 4 per cent to the GDP and 14 per cent of industrial production of India. The textile industry is composed of composite large scale mills, the decentralized sector and the power looms. The composite mills have the largest output and employment in the country. Maharashtra is the second largest textile hub of the country only after Gujarat. Most of the 12th pass population (up to the age of 18 years) is employed as operators and supervisors. Most of the unskilled and minimally educated employees are employed as operators and the IT/Vocational trained employees are employed as supervisors. Being the hub of textile industries, our discussion in Mumbai could bring out the industry specific skill requirements. The Mumbai discussion brought out the following key skill requirements of the textile industry:

Operator Level

The main skills required at this level are ability to operate machines, monitoring of the operations, ability to read indicators, gauge, dials etc. to make sure that the machines are running smooth and fine, ability to work on different machines, discipline, punctuality and regular attendance at the work place, adherence to cleaning and machine maintenance schedules, and ability to comply with quality norms. The main skill gaps at the operator level as brought out by our discussion are mostly technical in nature. They are: lack of knowledge of machines, quality, and inadequate ability handle multiple tasks at one time.

Supervisor level

At the supervisor level, which is a higher level than an Operator, the employees are skilled labor and are trained. So, the skill requirements are technical than the operator level and generic skills required to handle the work force at the operator level. The major skills required are: in depth knowledge of the machines and the production processes, ability to train the workforce, ability to manage the work force, proper understanding and maintenance of quality and maintenance of safety, cleanliness schedule of the machines. The operator have inadequate knowledge of the machines and production processes and are not up to date with the new production processes and machines and lack managing ability which is necessary to manage the operators.

According to an estimate by the National Skill Development Corporation women laborers constitute 50per cent of the Handloom and small scale industries. However, the share of women in the organized sector is negligible. In the small scale and handloom sector the government of India has taken initiative to train women labor force through NGOs and self help groups.

Organized retail

India's retail market is the second most attractive investment destination after Vietnam. In the financial year 2008, Indian retail market is estimated to be worth Rs. 13-14 lakh crore. However, the retail market is highly fragmented in nature. The organized retail market refers to the licensed retailing, with the hyper markets, super markets and retail chains. Clothing and textile, foot ware, consumer durables, home appliances, food and grocery, are the major retail sectors. The major skill gaps are found in the areas of shop floor assistance, back store operations and merchandising.

Health Care

As per the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Global Human Development Report (HDR) 2007, in spite of the absolute value of the Human Development Index (HDI) for India improving from 0.577 in 2000 to 0.611 in 2004 and further to 0.619 in 2005, the relative ranking of India has not changed much. India ranks at 128 among the countries with medium human development out of 177 countries of the world as against 126 in the previous year. India ranks 4th in the pharmaceutical sector by volume and 8th in terms of its value. However we are yet to achieve a lot in terms of our health indices. The segments of the Healthcare Services sector can be broadly classified into the Healthcare Delivery Segment, the Medical Devices Segment, and the Medical Insurance Segment. The Healthcare Industry, by its very nature, is dependant on qualified healthcare personnel, and the health workforce is central to advancing the healthcare facilities of any nation. One of the major problems for nearly all countries is an overall human resource shortage, which leaves gaps within the existing infrastructure and services, both within and outside the public sector. This problem is also very pertinent to India. As per the World Health Report 2006 by the WHO, India is one of the countries with the greatest shortage of health service providers (doctors, nurses and midwives), the others being Bangladesh and Indonesia.

Higher secondary school pass outs mostly are employed as ward boys, and other support functions as technical assistants. The skill gaps pointed out by the industry for the ward boys are inadequate knowledge of cleaning methodology, inadequate communication skills, inadequate biomedical waste management and proper segregation of waste, inadequate ability to maintain personal hygiene/sanitation levels. For the technician level of work the skill gaps that came out during the discussions are inadequacy in keeping up with technical advancement, inadequate statistical knowledge, in adequate domain knowledge, inadequate ability of equipment management and inability to adhere to hospital procedures.

With the privatisation of the health industry, new requirements of different and diversified skill sets have increased. These new corporate owned health centres, nursing homes and hospitals are not only in need of technically skilled medical staff but also require other staffs that can run these corporate houses efficiently. Thus, requirement other managerial level and lower level staffs are increasing. Overall the requirement of nurses, and technicians and paramedics account for over 75per cent of the incremental human resource requirement of the entire health sector.

Media

The media and entertainment sector in India is growing fast with growing expenditure by the Indian middle class, regulatory initiatives, corporate investments, and integration of existing players along value chains. The rising international interest in Indian media content, technological advancement and growing foreign direct investments are expected to fuel the growth of the industry further. The media industry can be divided into two basic heads: print and electronic media. The print media being the newspapers and magazines, electronic media comprises of television, films, music, radio, animation, gaming and advertising. Though television, print and films dominate the Indian media sector, emerging sectors like gaming, animation and advertising are expected to dominate the future of the media sector.

The skill requirements and skill gaps in the media sector is reviewed for the most important sectors like television, films, games and animation, and radio, which cover 70per cent of the entire sector. In the film industry high school and higher secondary school graduates mostly join as production boys and camera man, and can get promoted to set designers, costume designers, stunt coordinators etc. with growing experience. The industry thus looks for highly skilled laborer with specialized skill sets, and creativity. The skill requirements of the television sector are also the same. This sector also looks for highly skilled personnel with specialized skill sets and creativity. The animation sector requires even more skilled personnel with basic and advanced training in the animation. They must have creativity and hands on experience of animation software. They also require high level of computer knowledge. The major skill gaps faced by the animation industry are inability to write scripts keeping the consumers in mind, inadequate drawing and design skills, inadequate cinematography skills and inability handle advanced 3-D animation software. The print media mostly looks for professional graduates with good communication skills, both oral and written. The focus areas of skill developments in the media sector are development of both technical skills and soft skills.

Unorganized sector

The unorganized sector is a very important and integral part of Indian economy. The Ministry of Labor, Government of India, has categorized the unorganized labor force under four groups in terms of Occupation, nature of employment, especially distressed categories and service categories.

a. In terms of Occupation:

Small and marginal farmers, landless agricultural laborers, share croppers, fishermen, those engaged in animal husbandry, beedi rolling, labeling and packing, building and construction workers, leather workers, weavers, artisans, salt workers, workers in brick kilns and stone quarries, workers in saw mills, oil mills etc. come under this category.

b. In terms of Nature of Employment:

Attached agricultural laborers, bonded laborers, migrant workers, contract and casual laborers come under this.

c. In terms of Specially distressed categories:

Toddy tappers, Scavengers, Carriers of head loads, Drivers of animal driven vehicles, Loaders and unloaders come under this category.

d. In terms of Service categories:

Midwives, Domestic workers, Fishermen and women, Barbers, Vegetable and fruit vendors, News paper vendors etc. belong to this category.

The total employment in the unorganised sector is expected to be about 420 million (92per cent) out of a total workforce of 450 million in 2008. The extent of informal employment is estimated to be at about 92per cent-93 per cent between 2008 and 2012. Apart from agriculture, apparel, leather and leather goods, tobacco, textiles, furniture, construction and services sector like hotel, transport and retail are some of the major sectors with high concentration of unorganised employment totalling to an about 17 million enterprises. In the construction sector skill sets demanded from unskilled workers are mostly manual in nature with proper orientation towards safety. The skill gaps that came out of the discussions are mostly inadequate knowledge about safety issues, inability to follow instructions and inadequate work place related skills and ethics. In the textile and food industries apart from manual labour, knowledge of machines are also demanded from the labourers which is where they lack the most.

Table: key skill demands and gaps in select sectors

Sectors	Key skills in demand and gaps
Automobile	Inability to multi task, inadequate knowledge in terms of trade, sales, machineries lack of communication skills, insufficient understanding of discipline, industrial rules, work related procedures, inadequate orientation towards safety measures, tendency to rely on judgments than on instructions.
infrastructure	inadequate knowledge of construction specific area, lack of knowledge of basic machine operations, inadequate ability to understand instructions, very little safety orientation, inadequate workplace skills like discipline, cleanliness, inability to follow simple instructions, and low job loyalty
Finance	good communication (oral, written) skills, high level of perseverance, high energy level, emotional intelligence, and aptitude for repetitive work, integrity and managing customer's expectations, understanding of the industry, knowledge of the product, awareness of asset classes, basic financial concepts.
Textiles	lack of knowledge of machines, quality, and inadequate ability handle multiple tasks at one time, have inadequate knowledge of the machines and production processes and are not up to date with the new production processes and machines and lack managing ability which is necessary to

	manage the operators
Banking, finance, and insurance	lack of ability to comprehend the functioning of the industry, low level of enthusiasm and emotional intelligence
IT	functional skills: not very strong analytical ability, inadequate process compliance; Lack of attention to details; Lack of understanding of basic quality initiatives; Lack of understanding of information security and privacy issues soft skills: strong communication skills, aptitude for multitasking, perseverance
Tourism and hospitality	honesty, self-confidence, self-control, self-motivation, sociability, adaptability, integrity, punctuality, being well-groomed, cooperative and having good work ethics and team spirit
Organized retail	shop floor assistance, back store operations and merchandising
media	Lack of highly skilled personnel with specialized skill sets and creativity, lack of good communication skills, both oral and written
Health care	are inadequate knowledge of cleaning methodology, inadequate communication skills, inadequate biomedical waste management and proper segregation of waste, inadequate ability to maintain personal hygiene/sanitation levels, are inadequacy in keeping up with technical advancement, inadequate statistical knowledge, in adequate domain knowledge, inadequate ability of equipment management and inability to adhere to hospital procedures
Unorganized sector	inadequate knowledge about safety issues, inability to follow instructions and inadequate work place related skills and ethics

Skills and Gender Analysis

Employment is very much critical in eradication of poverty and women's empowerment. However, empowerment through employment, especially for a woman, depends mostly on the type of job and its ability to improve her well being and skills. The nexus of women and work is very complex and demands understanding not only from the labor market perspective but also from the socio-cultural perspective. Even today women labor force participation in India is behind the norm. "It is the urban

component that is very low, the rural LFPR¹ being high because of poverty and the necessity of work” (Bhalla and Kaur)²

With the growing economy lack of skilled human resources has proved to be a hindrance for Indian economy. Shortage of skills has always been the problem of sustainable development in India. With the increasing enrollment of women in the education system, gender stereotypes are withering away in the labor market. Women are perceived as better multitasker, efficient, flexible and sincere.

ICT sector is a great enabler for women. This sector has allowed women to work from home and flexi timing allowing women to have work life balance. However, the dual responsibility of working and managing homes leads to compromises on employment front, thereby making them susceptible to underemployment. Even their safety and security issues make their choices narrow in terms of employment opportunity. The women are gradually breaking the glass ceiling and are entering new and more challenging occupational terrains.

On the other hand, the Automotive Industry in India is characterized by maximum proportion of the workforce being male. Women employed in the Auto Industry in India, are mainly employed in functions such as design, HR, finance and in support office functions. This has primarily been the case due to the low availability of women who take up courses such as mechanical engineering in college. Companies, especially auto OEM's and Tier I suppliers, are making a conscious effort to increase the participation of women in the workforce, including in the core operations function. Whether women will participate in the operations workforce or not still remains to be understood.

At the education policy level, there still remains a gap between the education level, skill development and the labor market. And this is more so in the case of women labor force. Though the gender gap in educational enrollment, participation and attainment is decreasing over the time, but studies show that even today more women are found in the “knowledge” sector than the skill sector. Whereas more men are found in the skill development and professional courses and thus, increasing their employability over women labor force.

However, the present study shows that the attitude of the employers towards female labor force is changing. They are either positive or neutral about the abilities of a female worker as compared to a male worker. The study showed that many employers rely on women more than men for their soft and generic skills. So far as the technical skills are concerned, even today it is difficult to find women skilled labor. Hence the gap remains.

Rural-Urban Analysis

India is a country dominated by rural settings. Rural population constitutes 71 per cent of India's population and 80 per cent of India's poor. Though rural development has been on the developmental agenda of India for quite some time now, the actual rate of development is much slower in the rural areas as compared to the urban India. There is considerable evidence of marginalization and poverty in the rural areas in terms of resource allocation, infrastructure development and access to services, accelerating the urban centric population out migration. The rural populace is most likely to be not being reached by the developmental goals set out by the country, nationally and internationally.

¹ Labour Force Participation Rate

² Bhalla, Surjit S. and Kaur, Ravinder. “Labour Force Participation of Women in India: Some Facts, Some Queries”, LSE Asia Research Center Working Paper 40.

Education in rural areas does not provide a very bright picture. The rural population has very low educational capabilities. Mean years of education and educational attainment of rural work force is much lower than urban work force. Apart from that there is gender and caste difference in educational capabilities and attainment levels. 53per cent of the males and only 25per cent of the female work force completes primary education. Apart from this there are systemic quality differences in terms of educational institutions, teachers, and curriculum etc. across rural-urban setting and multiplied by caste and gender.

Given this setting, there is a need for develop both educational capabilities and skills in the rural areas. According to NSSO survey on employment and unemployment 61st round, 2004-05, only 2per cent of men (7.4per cent urban men) and 1.8per cent of women (11.4per cent of urban women) in rural areas have formal skills. The survey also brought out a strong relationship between educational level and formal skill. The rural Indian economy is primarily dominated by agriculture with very high population pressure on less agricultural land. Approximately 73per cent of the rural population is dependent on agriculture and approx. 60 per cent of the rural workforce is self employed and farmers. The debate about skill development for rural agricultural development mirrors the general skill development debate. Apart from agriculture, the rural economy is dominated mostly by small and medium scale industries and unorganized/ informal sectors like, handicrafts, craftsmanship. The informal sector constitutes 92per cent of the rural economy while 72per cent of the urban economy. Though these industries generates substantial foreign exchange for the country while, preserving the cultural heritage of the country, the fast economic reform and globalization has been having a negative impact on these small scale unorganized economy. Moreover, the out migration of youth from rural areas and their disinterest in learning the traditional skills is leading to further demise of this vibrant economy. Outdated curriculum, low quality of teaching, lack of infrastructure, weak linkages to employment, unequal access to resources are some of the key problems so far as skill development in rural areas are concerned.

Depending on the context, skill development in rural areas is necessary for broadening and strengthening the subsistence basis through diversification and reducing the dependency on agriculture, to become a part of the widening market economy and also to remain the part of the market economy. Matching training with the economic demand is the most important and the biggest challenge for the rural areas. Technical skills which are traditional in nature need to be passed on to the younger generation through an institutional system. Beside modernization of these skills is also necessary. Apart from these technical skills, there is a need to develop social, entrepreneurial and communication skills including self organization, bargaining skills. It is important to be able to provide flexible training delivery. Apart from skill development the rural economy needs to be boosted by financial assistance for a better future.

Lahore

Lahore is the capital of Pakistan province of Punjab and second largest city in the country. One of the most densely populated cities in the world, Lahore remains an economic, political, transportation, entertainment and educational hub. As of 2008 the city's GDP by purchasing power parity was estimated at a billion with a projected average growth rate of 5.6 percent. The contribution of Lahore to the national economy is supposed to be around 13.2 percent. Lahore's GDP is projected to be more than a billion by the year 2025, with a slightly higher growth rate of 5.6 percent per annum. Lahore is the second largest financial hub of Pakistan and has industrial areas including '*Kot Lakhpat*' and New Sundar Industrial Estate. The city is also the engineering hub of Pakistan. Major industries include automobiles, motorcycle, heavy machinery, railway coaches, home appliances, steel, telecommunication, IT, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, computers, and engineering and construction material. A major agglomeration with about 9,000 industrial units Lahore in recent decades has shifted

from manufacturing to service industries. Some 42 percent of its workforce is employed in finance, banking, real estate, community, cultural and social service. The city is Pakistan's largest software producing centre and lots of growing computer assembly industry. Lahore's economic strength relies on the fact that it is the biggest city of Pakistan's most populous province. It is also the most advanced in terms of infrastructure having extensive and relatively well developed road links to all major cities ,a rail link to India and the province's biggest international airport. Lahore also has head offices of many multinational and important national corporations like railways etc.

With such illustrious profile, the city of Lahore was chosen as the venue for the focus group discussion regarding the current study in collaboration with FICCI (India) and Lahore Chamber of Commerce Pakistan (www.lcci.co.pk) on 29th May, 2012.The discussion on skills for employability in south Asia was rich and well attended by the industry nominees.

Key Takeaways from Lahore

Mismatch between existing courses and industry needs

The industry representatives were of the view that there exists a huge gap between the current courses transacted and the skill needs of the industry. Integration of ICT in the curriculum was seen as a non negotiable. The link between industry and education needs to be strengthened .The curriculum should be updated and upgraded to match the industry requirements

Career counseling

The individual remain oblivious to their potential, talent, aptitude and career choices and therefore are unable to plan accordingly. Identifying the young and starting early in life through vocational counseling may prove to be very effective These gaps makes the youth directionless as they are unable to connect basic education to employment in the long run.

On the job training

The industry representatives opined that on the job training is very essential. No amount of theoretical knowledge can substitute for this. Such training not only provides practice to the candidates but also familiarizes the trainee with the real world of work.

Leadership

Leadership quality was valued highly by the participants of the discussion. Leadership not only brings out the best in the individual but also brings synergy to the team and organization both, thereby increasing the output and efficiency of the industry.

Communication

Communication skills are very essential for any organization. This helps a person to follow instructions more cogently and provide feedback to the seniors for speedier remedy of the impediment faced by the incumbents .Lack of communication skills leads to unnecessary bottlenecks in the organization.

Labor Information System

Non availability of labor information system leads to a lot of wastage in the economy. One of the consequences is over supply of skills supply for some sectors at the same time deficient supply in others. A good information system will plug such skill supply gaps.

Entrepreneurial Skills

Risk taking behavior along with creative business ideas should be encouraged from early stages of life. This will help shed the load from the organized sector and add productivity to the nation. This proposition can be enhanced by creating awareness and generating a good business environment in the economy

Education and Industry Twining

The students should be exposed to industry in the formative years. A few hours of periodic interface with the industry will have a long term impact on the productivity of the candidate. Vertical and horizontal linkage in skill development and formal education is a formidable challenge in south Asia.

Values and Ethics

Family is the first school of the child, therefore the values and environment in the family has a lasting impact on an individual's life. One should provide responsible parenting so as make their wards responsible and dutiful citizens, who can lead productive, Happy, optimistic and meaningful lives.

The major skill requirements that emerged from Pakistan are honesty, voluntarism, leadership, hands on experience, career planning, communication, loyalty, optimism, respect for seniors, entrepreneurial skills, conceptual understanding.

Gender and skills in Pakistan

Considering the diversity of Pakistani society, female empowerment has different meanings for women from different strata. Her status is always lower than the male partner. She is underprivileged in getting education, food, health care and freedom of choice of partner, number of children and other essentials of life. Traditionally, gender roles in Pakistan defines women's place as in the home and not in the public places, which has proved to be disadvantageous for education and skill development among women in Pakistan. The gender gap in education and skill development reflects on the labour market also. Most of the employers pointed out the shortage of skilled female work force in the market.

Sectoral Analysis in Pakistan

The Pakistani labour market is more or less a replica of Indian labour market. Therefore, the skill requirements sector-wise do not differ much. However, the skill development in Pakistan draws its base from the religious and other traditional sources. Thereby implying a more traditional approach to skill development in the nation reflecting on the over all development.

Regional Variation in Pakistan

Access to quality education and skill development varies across regions in Pakistan, thereby impacting all the three broad types of skill development. The development in Pakistan has also been urban centric and therefore, a huge gap between rural and urban areas is rampant. Within urban areas also there are pockets of high skill concentration making the region heterogeneous.

Dhaka

Dhaka the capital of Bangladesh is a megacity and one of the major cities of South Asia. It is the ninth largest city in the world and twentieth among the most densely populated cities of the world. Dhaka is also known as the 'city of mosque' and described as the 'Rickshaw capital of the world'. Modern Dhaka is the centre of political, cultural and economic life in Bangladesh. The city is attracting large foreign investment and greater volumes of commerce and trade. It is also experiencing an increasing influx of people from across the nation which has made it the fastest growing city in the world. Dhaka has two EPZ's which houses 413 industries. Urban development has sparked a widespread construction boom. Growth has been especially strong in finance, banking, manufacturing, telecommunication and service sectors while tourism, hotels and restaurants continue as important elements in the economy of Dhaka. The population is growing by estimated 4.2 per cent per year. The continuing also growth reflects ongoing migration to the city. According to Far Eastern Economic review Dhaka will become a home to 25 million people by the year 2025.

The focus group discussion was arranged with the industry houses of Bangladesh on Eighteenth July 2012 in collaboration with the Indo-Bangladesh chamber of commerce (indiabanglachamber.com) at the Nitole centre, Dhaka.

Key Takeaways from Dhaka

Hard work-the way to succeed

There is no shortcut to success therefore the need of any industry is to identify diligent people to enhance the productivity of the industry and sector both. Hard work and productivity are positively correlated.

Interpersonal Skills

The participants opined that interpersonal skills are of great value as they help in enhancing synergy within and outside the industry. The team work also yields better output. Possessing the interpersonal skills has far reaching impact in building and sustaining personal and customer relationship.

Communication skills

Communication and language are extremely useful in an individuals learning and substance in all situations. It is a prerequisite to thinking as we will not be able to think in absence of the language. This skill is foundational in nature and helps a person in all walks of life,

Training needs

Training should be imparted to individuals based on their competencies and life goals. Such training will be extremely helpful and lead to enhanced productivity of the individual as well as the sector towards which it is geared to.

Biased approach towards Government

The participants resented the biased preferences accruing to the public sector by the officials in the government. Such negativity de-motivated the personnel belonging to the non government sectors and reduced their productivity. This approach was detrimental to the sector as well as national growth with huge implication for the economy.

Dignity of labor

The skill development suffers severely due to colonized mindset of the people. Some sectors get labeled as low esteem work areas and therefore impacts the supply of labor force thereby denting its progress. Insurance sectors were described as a victim of such debilitating phenomenon.

Responsiveness to changes

The industry needs to be responsive to its ever changing needs of technology and reforms. Such adaptation will enhance the chances of industries survival and sustenance.

Job descriptions

The availability of complete job descriptions will help the skilled people to fit and find appropriate jobs in order to reduce the attrition rates which negatively impacts both the individuals and the industry

Teacher management

Teacher shortage was seen as a huge challenge in skill building among the youth. Teacher is the pivot of the education system and hence class room transactions can lead to formation of generic skills for a life. Therefore investing and focusing on teacher development may lead to a snowballing effect in the skill scenario.

Lack of quality Education

Privatization has led to deterioration in the quality of education as private institutions operate only on business model and lack the visionary approach in education thereby reducing the role of education only as an instrument of economic achievement. The knowledge imparted in schools is too theoretical and lacks relevance. In fact specialization should begin at school level so that the skills get firmly rooted early in life and the students can indulge in some 'out-of-box' thinking. Reading habits should also be emphasized in early years of ones life so that it stays for a life time with an individual.

Research based approach

A national system of education should be evolved based on research so that the glitches and gaps can be minimized keeping in mind the development of the nation. A life cycle approach can be adopted in such researches for maximizing the benefits.

The major skill gaps from Dhaka are language and communication, diligence, interpersonal skills, lifelong learning ability, behavioural skills, adaptability, safety understanding, time management, dignity of labor, accounting skills, secretariat skills, ICT, business acumen, negotiation skills, commitment, positive attitude, sincerity and honesty, KAIZEN method (gradual and incremental change).

Regional variation in Bangladesh

Dhaka being the capital of Bangladesh has a better system of education which leads to enhanced generic skill development at school stage. The education system weakens as we move away from Dhaka into the interior expanse of Bangladesh, this phenomenon hugely reflects in the skill formation in the nation. A strong education system will ensure better generic skill formation homogenously impacting uniform regional development

Gender and skills in Bangladesh

Gender is a cross cutting concern but due to gender parity in education the outcomes from the discussions were either neutral or positive. The employers particularly appreciated the commitment, honesty and organization of the women workers which enhanced their productivity at work. Most of the participants opined that women could balance both their reproductive and productive roles but lack opportunity to prove themselves.

Sectoral variation in Bangladesh

The skill gaps sector wise were not different from other two focus countries but the participants felt that there was discrimination by the government while allocating resources sector wise which in turn could alter the pace and pattern of the entire sectoral landscape. Some sectors boomed because of the impetus and fillip by the government while the others suffered due to marginalization.

Country wise skill analysis in South Asia

India the biggest country in the region is also a regional economic giant the neighboring countries like Pakistan and Bangladesh look forward to the leader in all aspects of development especially in education and skills formation for overall enhanced productivity. India has accelerated its skill development mission followed by Bangladesh. Pakistan is also catching up fast but lagging due to traditional dominant approach. Bangladesh is infested by external support therefore needs to focus on skill development from an indigenous perspective. Overall the region has made rapid strides but needs a more integrated approach for the region in order to reap the demographic dividends both in temporal and spatial dimensions. The following table, frequency chart and the Pie-chart spell out the major skill needs and values (which are foundational for skill development) country wise spread over five different cities:

Delhi	Mumbai	Bhopal	Lahore	Dhaka
Non cognitive				
Communication	Aptitude	Quest for knowledge	Voluntarism	Diligence
Leadership	Willingness to Learn	Good Communication Skill	Leadership	Interpersonal Skills
	Appearance and Personality	Teamwork and social interaction	Career Planning	Behavioural Skills
	Diligence & hard working	Time Management	Communication	Adaptability
	Influencing skills	Quick responsiveness	Entrepreneurial Skills	Time Management
	Multitasking	Positive Thinking and Attitude	Attitude	Dignity of Labor
				Attitude

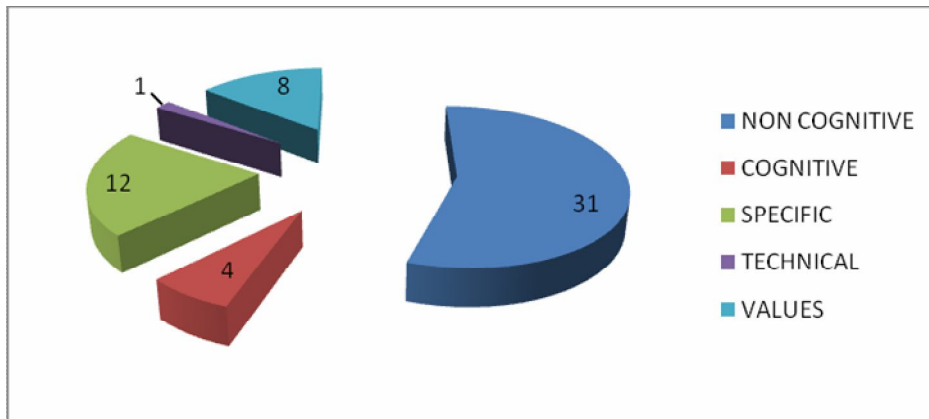
Cognitive				
Critical Thinking	3R's		Conceptual Understanding	
Specific Skills				
	Problem solving	Flexibility and Adaptability	Hands on experience	Language
		Physical Fitness and stamina		Safety
				Accounting Skills
				Secretarial Skills
				ICT
				Business Acumen
				Negotiations Skill
				Kaizen Method
VALUES				
		Values and Ethics	Loyalty	Understanding
		Honesty	Respect for seniors	Commitment
		Commitment & dedication		Sincerity

Table: Frequency chart of skill needs

	Delhi	Bhopal	Mumbai	Lahore	Dhaka	TOTAL
Non Cognitive	2	7	7	7	8	31
Cognitive	2	0	1	1	0	4
Specific	0	2	1	1	8	12

Technical	0	0	0	0	0	1
Values	0	3	0	2	3	8

Figure: Pie-chart showing Skill Needs



The pie chart is a graphical representation of the skill needs in terms of absolute numbers of frequency of response. The chart clearly indicates that employers are looking for non-cognitive skills, which are pre-dominantly generic skills and promote long term success of the employees. The second preference of the employers is for specific skills like safety skills. These skills are mostly expected from employees engaged with technical work load. Values related to acquiring skills like time management, positive attitude, ethics etc. are the third preference of the employers. Cognitive and technical skills are the least sought after skills by the employers given the level of employment and the age group under consideration. The non-cognitive skills fair the highest preference as they are more easily improved during adolescence than are cognitive skills and they often stabilize in the formative years. These non-cognitive skills are associated with considerable economic advantages including wage, employment and occupational status and bargaining power. It is very evident from the above analysis that the non-cognitive skills are the major requirements of the industries cutting across political, economic and sectoral boundaries in South Asia.

SECTION IV: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Countries at different levels of development can improve the employability, productivity and inclusiveness of economic growth with relevant education and skills. This realization has led to increased interest in skill development in order to drive the necessary changes to meet the development challenges. This is underpinned in the effort to bring the world of education and training closer to the world of work. Skill development is attracting heightened interest in many nations and regions. The challenges that are driving such interest are economic, social and developmental. Many change makers are aware that if their countries are to gain or maintain their status as high-income countries, they must produce the higher value added, higher quality goods and services that can yield higher wages and profits. To do this they need a skilled workforce and an education and training system that adequately prepares the young people to enter the labor market. The imperative runs alongside current rethinking on the pattern of economic development, which seeks not only rapid but inclusive growth. All stakeholders are concerned about and committed to achieving social equity, social inclusion, poverty alleviation and peace.

Lessons for skill Development at school stage in South Asia: Employer's Perceptions

The Indian analysis of the employer's perception of skill needs and skill gaps brought out that the requirement of the market is mostly of critical thinking, leadership skills, positive attitude, communication skills, dedication, time management, commitment, honesty, flexibility and adaptability, safety needs, good habits, personality and appearance, Basic understanding, Team work and social interaction. These skills requirements are make-up non-cognitive skill sets.

Similarly, the empirical findings from Pakistan highlighted that honesty, voluntarism, leadership, hands on experience, career planning, communication, loyalty, optimism, respect for seniors, entrepreneurial skills, and conceptual understanding is the most sought after skills by the employers. In Bangladesh, the skills required are language and communication, diligence, interpersonal skills, lifelong learning abilities, behavioural skills, adaptability, safety understanding, time management, dignity of labor, accounting skills, secretariat skills, ICT, business acumen, negotiation skills, commitment, attitude, sincerity and honesty and KAIZEN Method (gradual and incremental change).

Thus, it shows that the skills required and the skill gaps are non-cognitive skills. Non-cognitive skills are those skills that are very basic and generic in the survival of a person's in the labour market. These sets of skills are strong determinants of professional success. Recently, studies in economics have also started pointing out the influence of individual characteristics like persistence, leadership, and sociability on market outcomes. These are the skills that are not captured by conventional human capital frameworks and are the skills valued by employers or clients that do not involve technical or professional knowledge.

Key Principles for skill Development

- *Shared responsibility* : all stakeholders to together on the table to maximize the benefits of skill development
- *Integrated approach*: skill needs to be integrated at all levels and kinds of education and training. Such initiatives will enhance overall productivity of the nation and leading economic development

- *Lifelong Learning* : Practice makes a man perfect therefore constant improvement occurs over a period of time in perfecting a skill
- *Inclusive society*: Skill development provides opportunity to people who have been traditionally treading the margins.
- *Enhanced employability* : Skill development leads to better employability thereby altering the contours of development
- *Sector based approach*: sectoral demand should be factored in for skills development initiatives
- *On the job training*: workplace learning is a non negotiable as far as skill development is concerned.
- *Public private partnership*: Joint effort will have a wide out reach and therefore yield better results.
- *Monitoring and Evaluation* : Periodic monitoring and evaluation will enable the skill development program's correction and improvement at an early stage

The Skill Challenges

1. *Skill mismatch* : Skill obtained through education and training often do not match resulting in skills waste on one hand and skill deficit on the other
2. *Gap between industry and education*: Education and training is a feeder for industry and service sector. Both remain isolated and insular leading to skill gap formation.
3. *Quality of Education and training*: quality of education and training in the developing countries remains to be addressed. Quality is a cross cutting issue across curriculum, delivery ,teachers, learning levels etc
4. *Access and participation* : access and participation remain elusive to a large section of population
5. *Stagnation*: In absence of vertical mobility skill based occupations suffer from inferior social rating. This has a pull down effect on aspects related to skill development.
6. *Lack of Policy*: Policies related to skill development is either missing or nascent therefore their impact remains to be experienced.

The way forward

- Bring coherence in the system
- Coordinated and planned action
- Research needed for effective policy formulation
- Clarity in Institutional arrangement

- Learn from good practices
- Willingness and commitment
- Sector wise action plans
- Implementation and transaction of plans
- Focus on the unorganized sector

The skills pointed out above cannot be taught in curriculum framework separately but needs to be integrated with the overall pedagogy so that they get ingrained among all learners at an early school stage. A lot depends on the teacher's ability to transact effectively in order to build skills among the students. The demographic dividend will not be available in South Asia for the second time therefore the time is now. Skill development has arrived and we should go lock, stock barrel to seek it out early.

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Annexes

List of Participants: Delhi

Participants list: Bhopal

Name	Organization	Designation	Contact No.	Email	
Sl. No	Name & Designation	Company Name & Address		Telephone/ Mobile	Email
1.	Ms Anjali Sinha M.A	Project Manager iMOVE		47168807/06	sinha@imove-germany.de
2.	D Vasudevan	Executive Director Albion InfoTel Pvt Ltd		9810184295	dvasudevan@albionglobal.com
3.	Dr Poonam Agrawal	Professional Head Educational Research Division NCERT		9868910165	ms_poonam@hotmail.com
4.	Ms Simi Suri	HCL Technologies		9818125404	Simi.suri@hcl.com
5.	Ms Riyaz Khan	Director Tranzition Institute for Excellence		9891104026	riyaz@tranzition.org
6.	Mr. Abhishek Kumar	Intern CEE		9905979502	absishekiniifm@hotmail.com
7.	Mr. Pradip Das	Project Officer		9905979502	absishekiniifm@hotmail.com
8.	Mr. Ashok B Pillai	Director NFDC		9560674567	Pillai.ashok@gmail.com
9.	Mr. Alok Mohan	Project Manager		9718712389	Alokmoohan1097@rediffmail.com
10.	Gajendra Rai	Project Manager Centre for Media Studies		9582254614	gajendra@cmsindia.org
11.	Dr K C Tiwari	BVCOE		9971862304	kcchtpd@gmail.com
Dr Er Alok Gupta		The Institution of Young Engineers	Director	9893023210, 9406543504 0755-2751646	alok6gupta@yahoo.co.in alok6gupta@gmail.com
Prof A K Pathak		The Institute for Excellence in Higher Education	Professor	9425012680	Pathak.math@gmail.com
Manish Rajoria		Career Institute of Medical Sciences	Vice Chairman	91755504005 0755-2488090 2488390, 2586042	manish.rajoria@aadarsh.com
N K Chibbar		BHEL	Manager HRD	9425601968 0755-2502537	nkchibber@bhelbpl.co.in
Dr Manisha Srivastava		Bhopal Memorial Hospital & Research Centre	MD	9425012342 0755-2742549	manishasdr@gmail.com
M Isadore		BHEL	Sr. Dy. GM (HR)	9425605163 0755-2502135	misador@bhelbpl.co.in
Dr Ajay Narang		VASK Engg. &	MD	0755-4273290	anarang@gdkn.com

	Electronics Pvt. Ltd.			
Smita Pillai	Aadarsh Pvt. Ltd	Mgr Business Development	9893028555	smita@aadarsh.com

Participants list: Mumbai

Name	Organisation	Telephone	Email
Lakshman Seturaman	TISS	9930308826	lsethuraman@tiss.edu
Amir Sultan	TISS	9949066568	amir@tiss.edu
Ratan Vishwanathan	Four Seasons Hotel	9967641500	rajan.vishwanathan@fourseasons.com
Mihir Sheth	Springboard	9821119981	mihir@@springboardfor.com
Revathi Roy	VIIRA Cabs	9920374615	revathi_roy@rediffmail.com
Ms Suvrata Gharge	Mahindra	9892513425	gharge@suvrata@mahindra.com
Rupesh Jadhav	Four Fountains Spa	9987240705	rupesh.jadhav@thefourfountains.in
Supriya Kamble	L& T Pub. Charitable	9821911080	supriya.kamble@larsentoubro.com
Maj (Dr)Chetna Garg	TataChemicals Ltd	8976081022	cgarg@tatachemicals.com
Hemangi Apte	Keswa	8879639591	hemangi.apte@yuvaparivartan.org
Karon Shaiva	MD Idobro	9833433944	karon.shaiva@idobro.com
Ajay Khare	Independent Industrialist	9821216766	twoanet@sify.com
Prearna Langa	Yes Bank	9930062235	prerana.langa@yesbank.in
Suresh Lulle	Kherwadi	9892222704	resources@yuvaparivartan.org
Dr Vivekanand Sawant	Kherwadi	9323544902	sawantv@yahoo.com
Keshav Kher	Kherwadi		kishorkher53@yahoo.com
Mrinalini Kher	Kherwadi	9819691851	mrinalini@gmail.com
Neeraj Agarwal	Kherwadi		
Mayur Satyavrat	VIACOM 18	9930455152	mayur.satyavrat@viacom18.com
Abha Anand	Union Bank of India	9820868124	indiaabhaanand@unionbankofindia.com
M Anand	TATA AIG Life	9833133444	m.anand@tata-aig-life.com

List of Participants: Lahore

S.No.	Name	Designation	Organization	Contact	Email
1.	Sumaira Bashi	Manager HR	PSS Asia Pakistan	0321-4541374	sumaira.bashir@pssasia.com.pk
2.	Irfan Shoukat	Manager Coordination	PSS Asia Pakistan		
3.	Hammad A. Badar	B. D Manager	PSS Asia Pakistan		
4.	Awais Salman	Manager HR & Administrator	Techliance Pvt. Ltd.	0333-4858508 0331-4197300	awais.salman@techliance.com awaiskhan787@hotmail.com
5.	Atif Shehzad	Asst. Forum & Seminar Department	Daily Nai Baat	0321-7920791	besuperioratif@gmail.com
6.	Farhan UL Haq	General Manager	Orient Energy Systems (Pvt.)Ltd.	0300-8429570	farhan.haq@orient-powr.com
7.	Adil Siskandar	HR Manager	Cure MD	0333-4367924	adil.skandar@curemd.com
8.	Naila Hashmat	Director HR	Cure MD		
9.	Nisar Muhi UD Din	GM Technical	Diamond Jumbolon		nisar.mohyuddin@diamondfoam.com
10.	Abbas Haidar	HR Head	The Resource Management		
11.	Arshad Munnir Rana	HR Manager	The Resource Management		
12.	Faraz Haider	CEO	The Resource Management	0321-5555172	faraz.haider@yahoo.com
13.	Rakhshanda Jabbar	Managing Director	RJ Business Consultants	0333-4328885	hrm_brainltd@hotmail.com
14.	Manzoor Hussain	HR Head	Infogistic (Pvt.) Ltd.	0302-8476827	manzoor.hussain@infogistic.com
15.	Dr. Arshad Hussain Hashmi	Director Incubation Center	University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences	0300-4586603	d.bic@uvas.edu.pk
16.	Hassan Raza	Head HR	HKB	0321-4908415	hassanraza@hakbstores.com
17.	Muhammad Ljaz Khan	HR Head	Eastern Group of Companies	0323-4478007	hr@easterngroup-pk.com
18.	Tanveer Rasheed Seyana	Head HR	A2Z Solutions	0322-9333313 0300-2723903	tanveer.rasheed@live.com
19.	Awais Mahmood	Asst. HR Manager	ALM Human Resources Int'l	0345-8288388	owais@almhr.com

List of Participants: Dhaka

Sl	Name	Company and Designation	Contact Number	Email id
1	Abdul Matlub Ahmad	Chairman , Nitol – Niloy Group, Dhaka	9887071, 01711-563577(SMS)	matlub52@hotmail.com
2	Dewan Sultan Ahmad	MD Bangladesh System Technology Ltd., Dhaka	9104802, 01919004263	bstlbd@hotmail.com
3	Prasanta Das	National Sales Manager Sun Pharmaceuticals (B) Ltd.	9850087	prasanta.das@sunpharma.com
4	S Hedayet Ullah	MD , Vincent Impex Ltd Bangladesh	880-1713060707	vincent@vincentbd.com
5	S M Mahbubul	MD , Nitol Insurance Company Ltd	01713142751	m_karim_mk@yahoo.com
6	Sudhir Chandra Sarker	Nitol – Niloy Group	01819-252101	nitolcentre@yahoo.com
7	M J Sheikh	COO, Ion Exchange Environment management (BD) Ltd	02-8861078	mjsheikh@rediffmail.com mj.sheikh@ionexchange.co.in
8	K B Ahmed	President BMCCI	01713005655	bmcc.industry@gmail.com
9	Md Mofiz Uddin Chowdhury	MD & CEO, FAS Finance & Investment Ltd.	01730-009343, 88-02-8815841	mofizchowdhury.fas@gmail.com
10	Alamgir Kabir Chowdhury	Mng & Fiscal Partner Hoda Vasi Chowdhury & Co.	01711564860 880(2)9120090	akchwdhury@hodavasi.com
11	K Z Islam	MD Nirman Intl Ltd	880-2-8823046	nirman@agni.com
12	J P Victoria	Country Manager Dabur	01713019525	jp.victoria@dabur.com
13	M R A Taha	Chairman, Remex Cooperation Ltd	880-2-9881281	info@remexcorp.com
14	Abdul Mannan Ahmed	Director, NITA Co.	880-2-9883121	mannansir@yahoo.com
15	Abdul Halim	Exexc. VP, FAS Finance & Investment Ltd	01713-94231	halimsdp@hotmail.com
16	Nasim-ul Haque Chowdhury	Manager Sales, Bengal Inn Delta Hospitality Mgt Services	880-2-9880236	reservation@bengalinn.com
17	Sk. Md. Samiul Islam	MD , Union Textiles Ltd	880-2-9553603	info@dhakacotton.com
18	Brig. Gen. Kazi Anwar ul Islam	Advisor HR, Nitol Motors Ltd	8801919-095217	kazi1692@yahoo.com
19	Jahangir Bin Alam	Secretary , India-Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce & Industry	01713- 015289	jbalam44@yahoo.com