BRITISH COUNCIL

GED Global Education Dialogues

NEW HORIZONS

From Awareness to Action: Higher Education and Skills in South Asia

A British Council South Asia Report on the Second Series of Global Education Dialogues

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FOREWORD

Over the past two years, the British Council in South Asia has, through policy dialogues, new research and on-the-ground insight been building up a comprehensive picture of the tertiary education landscape in South Asia.

This report is the second in the series, building on the 2014 seminal publication on the current state of tertiary education in South Asia. Our earlier report, entitled 'Revolution and Realities in the New Economic Order' clearly outlines the calls to action for South Asia and the UK's HE and skills sectors to address.

The demographic time bomb of South Asia's rapidly growing youth population, the pace of social change and South Asia's elevated position in the new economic order has created a critical mass of latent potential. If the challenges outlined in this report are left unaddressed, there could be serious consequences, not just for the countries concerned but for the region and globally.

The demographics of South Asia coupled with its geopolitical and financial limitations suggest that conventional models of higher education delivery and economics cannot meet the scale of the challenges faced by countries in the region. To merely replicate the current models of provision and building more universities is not the answer. Large scale structural reform is required in areas of quality, leadership, skills & employability. This requires a much larger, systemic and coordinated response to make even a dent in the swelling ranks of those demanding more education and skills.

There will be a massive expansion of the vocational and HE sector in the years ahead. There will be a drive for quality but also obvious concerns about compliance during a period of dynamic change. Innovation in service provision, equity of access to opportunity, particularly to leadership roles for women and a clear relationship between learning and employability, is now a prerequisite to make the connection between quality education, relevant skills and prosperous stable societies. UK providers have a key role to play in these reforms, but they now need to deliver successful long-term outcomes and not just qualifications to be a true partner in South Asia's long-term social and economic development.

With India's successful Mars mission, Afghanistan and Pakistan's relatively peaceful transitions of democratic government, and Malala's Nobel peace prize for championing girls' education, 2014-15 has created a new horizon in South Asia, with palpable signs for optimism, real breakthroughs and huge opportunities for the region and globally. India, which has the fourth highest GDP of any country, dedicates just 1% of this to R&D. Imagine what could be achieved by doubling this investment and the role that the UK's world-class universities can play in this endeavour

I trust this report will be both insightful and help shape your strategy for partnerships between the UK and South Asia.

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CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ENGLISH, SKILLS AND EMPLOYABILITY

Potential

- There is a huge opportunity to change mindsets around skills. With 16 million young people entering the workforce every year, this is an issue that's a clear priority for the region and there needs to be a cultural shift in attitudes in South Asia and respect for skills generally
- Within the context of the skills debate specifically, learning English is a skill in huge demand. It has perceived economic and social benefits and acts as a direct premium to career progression, mobility and employability.
- The consensus seems to be that while English is part of the answer to the debate around skills in South Asia, it needs to be carefully integrated into high-quality education.

Challenges

- There is a clear mismatch of the demand and supply of skills in the graduate market, resulting in significant youth unemployment. Skills development in the region will require partnerships across business, government and institutions to develop appropriate incentives, financing and learning solutions to meet demand.
- The radical redevelopment of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) around the region must accelerate dramatically to address many skills challenges and provide opportunities for upskilling current and future workers.
- English is only likely to be of value if a strong educational base is in place. English language education, if part of skills development, should build on first language literacy and numeracy, and support also the development of generic employability skills.
- In general there is a lack of joined up thinking about the role of language in getting a job and also developing a role once secured.

Solutions

- Training the trainers – this must be prioritised for the success of any skills strategy.
- Higher Education bodies – there is a clear need for an urgent reassessment of content & curriculum, with an emphasis on employability to the fore.
- Employers – greater clarity required on numeracy, literacy and English standards required.
- Sector skills gaps – gaps need to be assessed relative to demand for skills at a job role level and then assessed again within each role for a specific skills gap to understand practical solutions.
- Stakeholders - bring together a single forum to get feedback to establish areas for research and reconcile differing attitudes. Devise a mechanism for a continuous relationship between stakeholders.
- Demand for English – there is a need for an expanded focus to recognise and respond to the social demand for English, aspirational demand for English, as well as demand for English related to economic gain, while at the same time understanding the need for a multilingual approach.
- Soft skills - a focus beyond technical skills to soft skills is a key policy imperative for growth in the region. Businesses are at least as concerned about poor English communication, interpersonal and problem-solving skills as they are about subject matter training.
- A change in approach - Curricula in schools must be changed to encourage development of employable skills as well compulsory job placements and on-the-job training programmes.

WOMEN AND LEADERSHIP

Potential

- Currently only 3% of vice-chancellors in the region are women. If we want our universities to meet the challenges of Higher Education in South Asia – then rapid progress on the number of female researchers, professors and VCs is a prerequisite for success.
- The huge potential of untapped female talent needs to be translated into senior appointments and leadership positions in higher education institutions in South Asia and beyond.
- Women have arguably in the past not been assertive enough in their attitudes to equality. They now have the potential to be fiercer, bolder and more outspoken. Women who do succeed need to realise their potential to engender change for other women.

Challenges

- Female representation in research positions is poor, particularly in South Asia. Research suggests gender imbalance is not taken seriously enough at the highest levels - or by women themselves.
- Mobility has become an important factor in career advancement. For South Asian women in their twenties or thirties, moving away from home may simply not be an option.
- A high emphasis is placed on the role of networking to achieve recognition as a researcher. Yet here, too, women are heavily disadvantaged because of a lack of access to networks.
- The absence of structured interventions to develop women's leadership was widely reported. There were no formal mentoring arrangements, very few development programmes and no structured capacity-building or career advice.
- Studies of academic cultures point to the patriarchal nature of higher education institutions (HEIs). They are frequently represented as unfriendly and unaccommodating to women.

Solutions

These include:-

- Mainstreaming: Gender to be mainstreamed into higher education policy in relation to students and staff, with equality seen as a central constituent in quality.
- Policies and plans: Policies on gender equality and mainstreaming to be developed and accompanied by strategic action plans, resource allocation and reporting mechanisms. These should include time lines, goals/ performance indicators and effective evaluation procedures.
- Better recruitment: Recruitment and selection of senior leaders to be reviewed to aim for more transparency and accountability in decision-making.
- Building capacity for leadership This includes research-informed, women-only leadership development programmes; access to doctoral degrees; training and continuous professional development opportunities, mentorship programmes and networks.
- Inclusive leadership. This has been identified as a major enabler for more women in leadership positions. So those representing the status quo must be involved in the design of any solution.

RESEARCH AND COLLABORATION

Potential

- South Asia's research capacity has been increasing but international collaborations have huge potential to go to match the intensity seen in other regions.
- Networks are an extremely important part of building intellectual capacity. Increasing amounts

of research investment are focused on creating knowledge transfer and innovative partnerships with industry.

- Research networks help to alter the economic paradigm in South Asian countries, away from a low-value production and export model, towards indigenous innovation and productivity as economic drivers.

Challenges

- In South Asia, science and high-tech research collaboration with industry tends to be driven by governments. Neither academia nor the private sector has a strong tradition of applied research and companies are risk-averse when it comes to investing in capital- intensive research and development (R&D).
- Funding for social sciences and the arts tend to rely heavily on volatile international funds, despite the potential for these disciplines to improve policy-making, promote social cohesion and build innovative societies.
- Due to limited human resources, funding for collaborative research becomes concentrated among a small academic elite, usually foreign-trained. This group, as a result, can end up over-burdened. Meanwhile, higher education institutions beyond the top tier are neglected.
- Industry is relatively underrepresented within South Asian international research collaborations. Industry participation is crucial to gaining a complete understanding of issues -then driving innovation and breakthroughs

Solutions

- Data – there are knowledge gaps in the extent and nature of research collaboration. There is a need for more comprehensive data.
- Start small – HE institutions should start with small collaborations, as they're much easier to get off the ground.
- Think broad – scale disciplinary divides i.e. linguists working with computer scientists.
- Achieving growth – there is a need to pay greater attention to education and invest greater amounts of funding into R&D.
- Financial support - A range of government tax incentives and legal mandates need to also increase to help companies increase their involvement in research outcomes.
- Strategic focus - There is a strong argument in favour of government leadership in research networks to develop new industries, particularly in science and technology.
- Social mobility - International research networks need to contribute to social mobility for South Asian researchers. Younger and female researchers are able to take on more responsibilities and progress their careers though participation in international networks.
- Intra-regional networks - There would be great advantages to more cross-regional research collaboration, given the similar conditions and challenges faced across South Asia. They can also foster improved diplomatic relations.

NEW MODELS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Potential

- There are major opportunities for policy makers, employers and academia to build new models and working alliances to meet the challenges of Higher Education in the region.
- Traditional model of Higher Education will need to change fundamentally. There are signs that this is happening - new models are already being introduced in some areas.

- Concerns around quality and accountability within a rapidly evolving Higher Education system have provided a welcome focus for more innovative approaches to assessing quality.

Challenges

- As the traditional suppliers of Higher Education, universities today are operating in a rapidly changing environment. The old system of institutional research and a large, in-house support staff is being shaken up.
- With higher education costs going up, the current learning model, with extensive support staff and hundreds of degree courses, needs to change to avoid becoming irrelevant.
- The “massification” of education supply brings with it numerous challenges for quality assurance. Measuring the quality and reliability of education is only going to get more complicated with rapidly growing - and more diversified - forms of education supply.

Solutions

These include:-

- Higher Education Models - quality will be the major concern, ahead of concern about public-private sector partnerships per se
- New models/partnerships - these will necessitate the “unbundling” of universities as a business model. This will mean a rapid growth in the number of non-institutional providers.
- Embrace an “open” future for universities – as national borders vanish, driven by technological innovation, all universities will have to work harder to demonstrate their distinctiveness and values.
- Adapt to new models of learning – institutions must realise that the consumer is now in charge. Whereas students previously attended a university to learn, now the university has to come to them.
- Develop a wider range of delivery choices - with universities highly flexible in their offer. Universities will need to continue to embrace technology and innovate.

ENGLISH, SKILLS AND EMPLOYABILITY: TRINITY OR TRILEMMA?

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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- Within the context of the skills debate specifically, learning English is a skill in huge demand. It has perceived economic and social benefits and acts as a direct premium to career progression, mobility and employability.
- The consensus seems to be that while English is part of the answer to the debate around skills in South Asia, it needs to be carefully integrated into high-quality education.

Challenges

- There is a clear mismatch of the demand and supply of skills in the graduate market, resulting in significant youth unemployment. Skills development in the region will require partnerships across business, government and institutions to develop appropriate incentives, financing and learning solutions to meet demand.
- The radical redevelopment of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) around the region must accelerate dramatically to address many skills challenges and provide opportunities for upskilling current and future workers.
- English is only likely to be of value if a strong educational base is in place. English language education, if part of skills development, should build on first language literacy and numeracy, and support also the development of generic employability skills.
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These include:-

- Training the trainers – this must be prioritised for the success of any skills strategy.
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- Employers – greater clarity required on numeracy, literacy and English requirements.
- Sector skills gaps – gaps need to be assessed relative to demand for skills at a job role level. And then assessed again within each role for a specific skills gap to understand practical solutions.
- Stakeholders - bring together a single forum to get feedback to establish areas for research and reconcile differing attitudes. Devise a mechanism for a continuous relationship between stakeholders.
- Demand for English – there is a need for an expanded focus to include social demand for English, aspirational demand for English, as well as demand for English related to economic gain.
- Soft skills - a focus beyond technical skills to soft skills is a key policy imperative for growth in the region. Businesses are at least as concerned about poor English communication, interpersonal and problem-solving skills as they are about subject matter training.
- A change in approach - Curricula in schools must be changed to encourage development of employable skills as well compulsory job placements and on-the-job training programmes.

POTENTIAL

In May 2015, the British Council's Global Education Dialogue (GED) in Colombo, Sri Lanka, on "English, Skills and Employability: Trinity or Trilemma?" provoked fascinating discussions and actions. The next section of our report focuses on the challenges and actions agreed as a result of that summit, along with those discussed at a key priority session on skills at our London GED – "Revolution and Realities in the New Economic Order" - held in January of the same year. In this section you will also find highlights from "Skills needed: addressing South Asia's deficit of technical and soft skills", an Economist Intelligence Unit report produced for the British Council.

There is a huge opportunity to change mindsets around skills. With 16 million young people entering the workforce every year, this is an issue that's a clear priority for the region and there needs to be a cultural shift in attitudes in South Asia and respect for skills generally. Decision makers in Government, business and Higher Education in the South Asia region will need to get a lot better at mapping the skills required in different sectors.

Many of the challenges facing South Asia are similar to those in the UK and elsewhere. They are not unique to the region and much can be learned from best practice wherever in the world it is to be found. Within the context of the skills debate specifically, learning English is a skill in huge demand. It has perceived economic and social benefits and acts as a direct premium to career progression, mobility and employability. However, employers, educationalists and policy makers in the South Asia region all need to understand more readily where and why English is needed and how exactly it fits into the broader debate around skills. The consensus seems to be that while English is part of the answer to the debate around skills in South Asia, it needs to be carefully integrated into high-quality education from the beginning of school and then throughout the education process.

South Asia is facing a mighty challenge in terms of its human and especially youth capital unprecedented in its modern history. A quarter of the population in South Asia is aged between 15 – 24 and estimated to increase by a further 12.1 million in 2015 alone (ILO). Many young people in South Asia are caught in a low skills, low pay poverty trap of insecure and sometimes hazardous work. Skills and employability deficits are putting a whole generation of young people at risk.

There is an alternative – one full of potential for the region: a demographic dividend contributing to growth and prosperity. Skills development has taken centre stage in many countries in South Asia as part of an effort to alleviate poverty, promote social mobility and address inequity on many levels. This is a policy area the region must prioritise for its possibilities.

CHALLENGES

Skills urgently needed - addressing South Asia's deficit of technical and soft skills

This section is based around a research report commissioned by the British Council and conducted by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) and presented at the Colombo GED.

South Asia's ability to reap its full economic growth potential over the next decade will heavily depend on the ability of states to dramatically upskill their youth to maximise demographic dividends. This necessitates skills development across three major growth sectors (agriculture, manufacturing and services), with particular emphasis on the relevance of soft skills development amongst South Asia's youth to meet demand in the hospitality, IT and business process outsourcing (BPO) sectors. As the chart below shows there is a clear mismatch of the demand and supply of skills in the graduate market, resulting in significant youth unemployment.

Skills development in the region will require partnerships across business, government and institutions to develop appropriate incentives, financing and learning solutions to meet demand. There is also space for improvement across both technical vocational education and training (TVET) and university spaces to better prepare graduates for the workplace.

Education and skills development can be divided into two major areas for action:-

- **Harnessing youth for growth.** South Asia has one of youngest populations in the world - around 40% are under the age of 20 - and the population is expected to keep growing until 2045. Over the next 2-3 decades, the region will produce an average of 16m new labour market entrants each year, most of who will be aged between 15 and 20 years. To equip this future workforce with the right skills to meet demand in growth sectors such as BPO, high-end manufacturing, health, hospitality and infrastructure will return a massive economic dividend. Failure to do so will result in a disenfranchised youth, increased rates of skilled and unskilled emigration, worsening poverty and stalled economies. South Asia's fast-growing youth population now need to be incentivised to undertake further studies in high-demand areas, and equipped with the right skills to ensure they are employable upon graduation. The development of soft skills and language would be of particular benefit with employers across the growing services, infrastructure and health sectors identifying this as a major gap amongst graduates
- **Upskilling the current workforce.** Seventy per cent of South Asia's current workforce are characterised as informal, unorganised and unskilled. With low levels of basic education this group offers the biggest challenge for skills development across the region to meet growing demand for skilled workers in these sectors. And while the roll out of universal education should reduce these numbers, a large basic skills gap will still remain for some time to come. The development of this group's skills is critical to poverty reduction and boosting domestic demand. Scope for soft skills development amongst this group would be better developed via on-the-job training through apprenticeships or mentoring opportunities.

Estimated graduate unemployment

65% Afghanistan

28% Pakistan

33% India

>20% Nepal

47% Bangladesh

7.8% Sri Lanka

Source: Labour ministry surveys, expert interviews

How can we make more of TVETs?

The radical redevelopment of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) around the region would significantly help to address many skills challenges and provide opportunities for upskilling current and future workers. A flexible system could offer opportunities from the development of basic literacy skills to the delivery of highly qualified skills. The biggest benefit though of the TVET system is in its ability to produce well-rounded skills: both course work and on-the-job training enables students to develop both the soft skills and technical skills they need for the workplace.

This ability to produce employable graduates for growth sectors such as construction, hospitality, tourism and manufacturing is being recognised, with the region's governments with India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh all making moves to reinvigorate their systems. But the capacity to transform rapidly is low: systems are underfunded: public spending amounts to less than 5% of the region's education budget; training is fragmented, coordination with industry is poor and the system itself has a bad image—it is regarded as a last resort for those who "fail" formal education, while some employers are reluctant to train their staff for fear that they could join competitors.

Across the region, TVET reform requires the:-

- Lowering of entrance prerequisites and inclusion of literacy and numeracy bridging courses to upskill those who have only received basic education;
- Shorter timeframes for course completion;
- Overhaul of curricula in line with industry requirements; the recognition of practical skills learnt through family trades towards completion certificates;
- Provision of financing options to students; and the
- Development of incentives to the private sector to encourage partnerships and apprenticeships.

Some private and NGO run programs in India, such as IL&FS Skills, B-ABLE and Gram Tarang are making significant headway at an institutional level: IL&FS Skills for example, trained 100,000 people in 2012 alone.

Sector Challenge: Where are the Engineers?

Engineering skills will be critical to economic development. Infrastructure will continue to be a major growth sector around the region over the next decade. Major roads, ports and rail projects are expected to come online in India and Sri Lanka over the next five years, while boosting energy production is a major priority region wide—shortages inhibit major industry growth, especially in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal.

The demand for skilled infrastructure professionals such as engineers, architects, designers and managers is already high and unmet across the region amongst both local and foreign companies. The problem is twofold: first, is that not enough students are studying these subjects: in India, for example, less than 1 in 6 university students were studying engineering and technology in 2012-2013.

The second issue is that amongst those who do graduate, most are unemployable: in Bangladesh for example, unemployment is highest amongst engineering graduates and India's 2013 National Employability Report found that only 21% of its engineering graduates are employable.

Sector Challenge: Where are skills needed most?

Services: Graduates not workplace ready

Though services contribute over 50% to regional GDP, opportunities for growth are highly diversified. Those offering sophisticated international services (India and Sri Lanka) in the business process outsourcing (BPO), information communications technology (ICT) and hospitality sectors will see the biggest economic returns and demand for skilled workers. In Nepal, more basic services are linked to the success of domestic agriculture, so a poor yield will lead to stagnated services—though tourism is a possible exception. Afghanistan's domestically driven services sector has been in decline with the drawdown of foreign troops and looks unlikely to experience significant growth over the next decade. Bangladesh and Pakistan's services sectors sit somewhere in between, and if they can upskill its future workers efficiently enough, it may be able to deliver sophisticated services to international clientele. A significant soft skills gap is already impacting sector growth though. India's BPO companies are desperately in need of engineers and software developers to service foreign clients but are increasingly frustrated by graduates who are not workplace ready. Poor problem solving, lateral thinking, communication and decision making skills, and an inability to work in a team are listed amongst the most significant failings.

Hospitality, Tourism & Retail: Significant shortages in soft skills

Demand for workers with strong, soft skills to service the foreign and domestic markets will continue to be high in South Asia's hospitality and tourism sectors, especially in India and Sri Lanka where the industry will experience the most rapid growth. A soft skills deficit in hospitality has long been an issue for those in the industry. Leaders in India's hotel sector estimate that only 10% of university graduates are job ready - once again they lack core communication, customer relations, complaint management and critical thinking skills that the industry requires. Many major hotel groups long-ago established their own in-house training programs. Accor's, a leading international hotel group, programme is designed to develop staff from the ground up, fostering soft skills and mentoring potential leaders through face-to-face training, e-learning, project work and on-the-job training.

Health & Education: Overseas brain drain

Demand for health and education services will grow in line with each country's middle class. India, for example, estimates it will need an additional 3m doctors and 6m nurses by 2034 to meet anticipated demand. And while university curriculums must ensure they offer the most current and cutting-edge skill set, further consideration must be given as to how to retain graduates. Many doctors and nurses currently immigrate to OECD or Middle Eastern nations (this is a huge problem for Sri Lanka and India) to increase earnings, work in better facilities and access career-long development opportunities.

Agriculture and Agribusiness: Upskilling of farmers required

Despite its declining contribution to GDP, agriculture is the region's biggest employer and will remain a critical safety net for many over the next decade. For Afghanistan and Nepal in particular, agriculture offers the best sector for growth over the next decade. Both countries have suffered recent declines in their manufacturing and services sectors and will face difficulties implementing the necessary structural, governance and infrastructure changes needed to boost substantive sector growth. The upskilling of farmers to encourage cash-cropping and agri-business offer the best opportunity for economic growth and is the most effective way of implementing crop diversification to meet growing domestic and foreign demand. Upskilling farmers in Bangladesh would also contribute to the further growth of the country's frozen food export industry.

Construction: more trades skills needed

South Asia's already high demand for labourers will continue to grow over the next decade. In India, the sector is already the country's second biggest employer, and is still expected to create six times more jobs than IT-related sectors by 2022. However, 83% of India's construction labourers are characterised as unskilled and across the region, this group represent a large proportion of South Asia's working poor. Labourers are also highly transient, with many seeking higher paying opportunities amongst regional neighbours or in the Middle East. Poor literacy and numeracy standards are listed amongst the most problematic skills gaps for employers. The region is also in desperate need of tradespeople, with shortages of plumbers, electricians, finishers and carpenters a reflection of unsuitable TVET and apprenticeship solutions. Inclusion of apprenticeship opportunities will also significantly contribute to the development of soft skills.

Manufacturing: more complex products will require a more developed workforce

South Asia's manufacturing sector has traditionally been dominated by textiles, requiring labour intensive, unskilled or semi-skilled workers. The dominance of the industry is unlikely to shift significantly in Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka or Afghanistan over the coming decade for various reasons: workers still remain cheaper than mechanisation in many instances; some nations, such as Sri Lanka, will seek to grow services instead; while others will remain unable to develop more complex industries. Thus, workers are unlikely to require significant upskilling to meet demand. Expansion into complex-manufacturing sectors such as automotive, pharmaceutical, chemical and electronics will see a shift away from labour intensity towards mechanisation and skill intensity, requiring a more developed skill set from its workers.

The Role of English in Skills Development in South Asia

This section is based around a research report commissioned by the British Council and conducted by the Open University (OU) UK.

This report covers the policy initiatives and interventions in seven South Asian countries that promote English language learning programmes as part of employability agenda. It also looks at the relationship between English language learning and economic gain.

There are strong demands for English across society because of its perceived economic and social value. There are also several policy initiatives and interventions that promote English language learning programmes as part of skills development. While skills development and English language teaching are in high demand, there are issues about how this demand could and should be met. What contributes to economic development is not simply the provision of schools and teachers. We need to ensure that children in schools are learning things that the useful in gaining employment. Several skills have been identified as lacking: these include English skills, but also skills such as computer literacy and communication skills.

These studies suggest the provision of quality education has a positive effect on economic development. Within this context, English also has a positive impact and it is certainly the case that English language skills are highly rewarded in the labour market. Research does not suggest that use of local languages hinder economic development. Indeed, local languages may be of particular value in informal labour markets.

While the results point to positive returns to English, one cautionary note is that much of the existing research is about individuals working in high-level jobs (not the informal and less skilled sector). And it is difficult to separate returns to English language skills from returns to quality education.

The strong beliefs about the power of English make it all the more important for all stakeholders to communicate clear messages about the value of basic education – and that skills in English are only likely to be of value if a strong educational base is in place. English language education, if part of skills development, should build on first language literacy and numeracy, and support also the development of generic employability skills.

English Skills for Employability

The section is based around an ongoing Think Tank research collaboration between British Council Examinations India, Trinity College London, City and Guilds and National Skills Development Authority. An abridged version of the summary presented by Emma Sue Prince of Unimenta is recorded below.

Our research into English, Skills for Employability is ongoing, but this summary gives a snapshot of what is being worked on. The research focuses on English as a Skill for Employability for entry level and semi-skilled employment in the sectors of Healthcare, Hospitality and Construction. The report also explores the facilitating role that the Common European Reference Framework (CEFR) for language can play for all languages in India, in the context of the NSQF, to improve the quality of language training and facilitate better progression in learning. These are just some of the preliminary findings into what has been found.

English is clearly an important part of improving economic and social mobility. It is an important part of vocational skills and we think a complimentary framework for defining language capabilities should be introduced in parallel to a National Qualification Framework to ensure. This will provide greater clarity around requirements for language skills that are often independent of the vocational or technical skill and depends more on the context of employment or job role.

It is clear that employers may not have particular language competences in mind around English skills when it comes to recruitment and so the judgement of these things can be rather subjective. For the employee as well it means that they may not know whether language is required in particular job role. In general there is a lack of joined up thinking about the role of language in getting a job and also developing a role once secured.

We looked at three sectors - healthcare, hospitality and construction – taking a spread of job roles across both formal and informal sector and with defined business outcomes. It's clear from our research that the sectors are quite different, but that English language can play significant role in each. .

In **healthcare**, a lot of documentation is in English so employees need have quite a high-level of English reading and writing skills and sometimes specialised vocabularies. Speaking English of course is very dependent on the job context - for example where they are based. Hospital employees in one of the cities we studied didn't need to use English but in an urban hospital in Delhi they clearly did.

For **hospitality**, people often think in terms of tourism. But actually that's quite a small part of the industry. Hospitality covers all manner of things from working a five-star international hotel to working in the canteen.

In **construction**, one of the largest employers in India, you have highly qualified engineers working alongside short-term labour contractors with no literacy whatsoever. Much of the signage in the industries in English and visually at least there is a need to understand what these visual instructions mean.

If you ask employees in the region under study about learning English what you can immediately find is that this is something that they see as important but don't feel that they have the opportunity to learn. The big question is whether employers give employees the time to learn. There are no defined benchmarks in the region to support language learning specifically. Instead, English language is bundled up with other skills rather than separated out. English is not seen as a barrier to entry to a profession but certainly in terms of long-term progression it seems very important.

SOLUTIONS

SKILLS: KEY ACTIONS FROM THE GLOBAL EDUCATION DIALOGUES SECOND SERIES

Key actions agreed at the London GED – "Revolution and Realities in the New Economic Order"

From the London GED discussion and debate:-

- Migration and urbanisation of the workforce in South Asia – this will put an imperative on upskilling and a change in balance in favour of growth sectors.
- Training the trainers – this must be prioritised for the success of any skills strategy.
- Higher Education bodies – there is a clear need for an urgent reassessment of content & curriculum, with an emphasis on employability to the fore.
- Employers – greater clarity on numeracy, literacy and English requirements.
- Skills mismatch – this is already very visible and there is a clear need for further research to inform the best decisions.

From the London GED research:-

South Asia must pursue the skills development and education of two groups—the future workforce and the current unskilled workforce—to ensure opportunities for economic growth are achieved.

- o Current unskilled workforce – there is a clear need for basic literacy development, improving agricultural productivity, basic manufacturing skills and lower management courses.
- o Future workforce – it's vital to harness improvements in basic education to upskill and incentivise young people to study at university and through TVET to meet demand in high-growth sectors i.e. high end services, complex manufacturing.

Key actions from the Colombo GED – "English, Skills & Employability: Trinity or Trilemma?"

A framework to better understand & prioritise sector gaps: 2 Visions, 2 Approaches & 2 Rules

Two Approaches:-

- o Sector skills gaps – assess gaps relative to demand for skills at a job role level;
- o Within each role assess specific skills gap actually to understand practical solutions.

Two Visions:-

- o Realistic Vision: What's the current demand? And how can we close skills gaps in the short term?
- o Futuristic Vision: How are specific industries/sectors evolving? Which roles may be created/ are being made redundant.

Two Rules:-

- o Accountability: it lies with the Government to lead discussions, but the solution must be led by business.
- o Attention to detail: a commitment to get "hands dirty" in getting the right data to make informed decisions.

A framework to change attitudes to skills development in South Asia

There is an urgent need to change attitudes and mindsets towards skills as a precursor to action. What are the key steps to bring the key stakeholders (e.g. public and private sector and HE) together?

- o Bring together stakeholders: A need to create a single forum to get feedback, establish areas for research and reconcile differing attitudes.
- o Keep it together: Devise a mechanism for a continuous relationship between stakeholders, including dialogue and negotiation and a collaborative approach to putting a strategy together.
- o Skills awareness branding: Use of TV and radio in South Asia to promote skills needs, with the involvement of the private sector through an appeal to their CSR responsibilities.

- o TVET branding: To reduce social stigma and poor perceptions around TVET.
- o Schools: Training in careers awareness around skills.
- o Informal sector: Ease entry and exit passage for informal sector workers to gain desired qualifications.

ENGLISH: KEY ACTIONS FORM THE GLOBAL EDUCATION DIALOGUES

Key actions agreed at the Colombo GED – "English Skills & Employability: Trinity or Trilemma?

The demand for English

English is clearly in demand, but we need to understand more about how and why this is so. These actions should be taken to gather a useable evidence base?

1. Perceptions and Realities - There is a need to draw a clear line between the two by accepting a wider focus. This expanded focus should include:-
   - o Social Demand for English;
   - o Aspirational Demand for English, as well as
   - o Demand for English related to economic gain.
2. Sectors - a need to prioritise the following growth sectors for close analysis - Construction, Business, IT, Education and Hospitality.
3. Research – this should be undertaken into the informal as well as formal sector to establish regional variations and other types of marked difference. The research would fall into 2 areas for action:-
   - o Plan to gather existing research to understand the nature of demand and identify new areas of need for English;
   - o Commission fresh empirical research to reflect these areas.

Key Actions agreed from London GED – "Revolution and Realities in the new economic order"

- Soft skills - a focus beyond technical skills to soft skills is a key policy imperative for growth in the region. Businesses are at least as concerned about poor English communication, interpersonal and problem-solving skills as they are about subject matter training.
- A change in approach - Curricula in schools must be changed to encourage development of employable skills as well compulsory job placements and on-the-job training programmes.

IMPACTS

THE BRITISH COUNCIL AT WORK

Developing business skills – the HSBC British Council Youth Enterprise Awards

The purpose of The HSBC British Council Youth Enterprise Project is to identify graduates with viable business ideas and provide them with necessary skills and training and seed funding to open their business ventures.

Selected applicants work continuously for 30 hours to develop unique and viable business ideas under seven industry categories. We introduced the social enterprise concept to this project with the support of University of Northampton for our latest awards and it was well received by the students and the industry sectors in Sri Lanka. There were number of success stories and networks developed between state universities and industry sector as a reason for this project.

This exercise brought engagement with 1046 individuals, of which 336 applications were received from applicants of both State and Private sector universities across Sri Lanka. This project:-

- Encouraged graduates to be job creators rather than job seekers to tackle the problem of graduate employability.
- Engaged with 1046 individuals and 337 applications – applicants spread across the country – Western, North, Sabaragamuwa, Uva Wellassa, Central etc.
- Attracted applicants from both State and Private sector universities (20 – 25 HE institutes).
- Enabled applicants to be trained by Dr Holger Siemons – University of Northampton on 'Key success factors in achieving social value through social enterprises'
- Provided opportunity for training provided by mentors on various subjects – Social Enterprise, Finance Management, How to set up a business, Sales & marketing, production etc
- Encouraged collaborative working – students from different HE institutions forming teams with viable business ideas (University of Colombo working with University of Kelaniya)

Some of the winning ideas that got funded by the HSBC this year:

- A smart mobile solution for pharmaceutical products - A smart-mobile drug store solution which enables consumers to order pharmaceuticals online and the ordered items to be delivered directly to a location of the consumer's choice.
- A liquid organic fertilizer -Agro solution from decomposing materials using worms
- From banana waste to accessories - Produce fashion accessories such as ladies belts, using the fibre easily extracted from the remaining portion of the trunk after harvesting.

One shortlisted applicant said: "My team received both funding and knowledge on small businesses, available investments and resources, sustainable models and how to embed social enterprise aspect into businesses".

Developing English and soft skills for employability

The Vocational Education and English Skills Training Project (VEEST) ran from 2010 to 2014 in two rural districts of North India; Sirsa in the state of Haryana, and Sitapur in Uttar Pradesh. It was a partnership between the British Council, the Confederation of Indian Industries, City & Guilds (UK), and was funded by the European Union. VEEST was supported by the local governments of Sirsa and Sitapur, and was delivered through partnerships with local education institutions, schools and colleges. VEEST training centres were also set up in each district.

As part of the project, the British Council selected and trained English teachers to deliver the specially-designed Workplace English course, which aimed to improve the English language and soft skills of 10,800 young adults from disadvantaged backgrounds, leading to better employability prospects. The course was offered free of cost.

Impact

- 11,232 target learners successfully completed the British Council Workplace English course. Evaluation data including end-of-unit and end-of-course assessment scores for each learner, and quantitative and qualitative feedback from learners and teachers demonstrates that learners typically made excellent progress in their English and soft skills, and that they were highly satisfied with what they gained from the project.
- More than 60 teachers were selected and given extensive training to enable them to deliver the Workplace English course, using learner-centred approaches
- Monitoring data suggests that most teachers consistently met expectations in terms of their use of English and classroom performance.
- After the end of the project, teachers' enhanced skills enabled them to find better jobs, and some teachers set up associations to continue delivering training courses on their own, thus demonstrating the sustainability of project objectives.
- Establishing a successful and robust delivery model constitutes an additional outcome. This unique model includes recruitment procedures, teacher and learner training materials, delivery mechanisms, remuneration systems, mentoring, monitoring and evaluation processes. This model can potentially be replicated elsewhere, is scalable, and supports the objectives of the Indian National Policy on Skill Development that call for, 'the establishment of flexible delivery mechanisms that respond to the characteristics of a wide range of needs of stakeholders'.

OPINION

"If we can harness the talent it will pay rich dividends ..."

Louise Cowcher, Bangladesh, British Council

In my view, a number of key issues and consequences arise from the GED report "Skills needed - addressing South Asia's deficit of technical and soft skills".

The research shows the youth population is a very, very large percentage of the population in South Asia. If we can harness the talent it will pay rich dividends, but if we can't we will have a huge challenge with a workforce short on the right skills- and a lot of very unhappy young people.

The solution is not all about grand skills policies and strategies - it's important to remember that not everybody works for a multinational. A large proportion of the current workforce in South Asia works in the informal (or unorganised) sector. Many employers are sole traders or very small companies. There is a clear need for skills, whatever the size of the business and a growing evidence for the need for greater professionalism in areas such as building maintenance, procurement and logistics. There is also clearly a requirement by employers for more workers to demonstrate more soft skills as an integral component for "work readiness".

"I wanted to find hard evidence of the impact of English"

Dr. Elizabeth Erling, The Open University (OU).

I've been involved in English language teaching projects internationally for 20 years. My research focuses on the impact that English language education has in people's lives.

In my research, I wanted to find hard evidence of the impact of English. Research shows that being fluent in English increases wages by 34%, while being slightly fluent increased them by 13%. Another study shows that language skills are not only highly rewarded but in fact can constitute the highest increase in rewards from learning.

English language skills on their own cannot provide the skills to employability and out of poverty. There are many complicated variables at work here, such as peoples' levels of experience, the sector they work in, where they are based, as well as their sex, age and so on. And discrimination against low Caste members still appears to outweigh the bonus of learning. So it's important to remember, English is not an equaliser for the long embedded inequalities and cannot of themselves provide disadvantaged individuals with the resources they need to catch up.

That the learning of English can have a positive transformational effect should not of itself be surprising. Any subject or skill that we learn should be transformational. And English skills are only likely to be acquired on a strong foundation base of education, so the main priority for skills development should remain on the quality of basic education, delivered through a language majority of learners understand.

"How much English is enough for each sector and job role?"

Anita Rajan, Chief Operating Officer Tata STRIVE & VP Tata Sustainability Group, India

To me, the "Trinity or Trilemma" question is a glass "half-full" or "half empty" type of thing. I think there are opportunities here, alongside some huge challenges.

Skills are the defining issue in India at the moment in business boardrooms. This is not just an economic issue, though, but a social one too. We have about 1 million people coming into the workforce every single month. The view from business is very clear to us: the single biggest barrier to the employability of these people is a lack of soft skills. By this I mean things like communication capabilities, including English. Soft skills represent the barrier that many students are unable to jump over to get their first job.

There is better news. We are also very clear that the reason for global competitive advantage for India lies through a familiarity with English that India already has. Our IT industry is one of the top three globally and the reason we have made gains is because we have people who are able to understand and work in English. In other sectors with global ambitions for growth, therefore, there is a need to see English competency amongst workers. Fortunately, there is a huge aspiration amongst a wide cross-section of the Indian population to learn the language. It is clearly connected to their sense of self-worth and confidence, better job prospects and upward mobility.

When it comes to learning skills more generally, in India we have a peculiar problem. To acquire skills usually comes at the cost of a family income. If you spend 10 days in training it usually means 10 days of lost wages. Young kids lose that learning habit, with families below the poverty line pushing kids into getting money home. Any skills programme has to be sensitive to that.

Partly as a result, training providers are introducing many more short-term training programmes. The key question is: Can you really improve via communication and behavioural programmes over short periods of time. Can you kick start programmes with, say, functional English programmes relevant to your particular sector? And how do you then get people to go on to learn the language to higher levels of proficiency?

Our organisation targets disadvantaged groups and we're working on creating short-term training programs to get them into jobs. Once there, they can move from the informal to the formal sector and start to take charge of their own lives. The big challenge is how much English is enough for each sector and job role. Does someone working in a customer facing role need more English? Does a welder working on the shop floor require the same competency of English - or he can manage in his home language with a smattering of functional English from time to time?

In my view certain questions need to be answered:-

- We need more trainers – But where will they come from? Are they the teachers already in our schools? Or will those teachers be able to at least teach the foundational theoretical or basic elemental areas?
- Technical & Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is quite a different thing to teach, so can practitioners from industry come and teach? They may be master crafts people but can they transfer this learning effectively through a more formal education process?
- Can the onus of learning be transformed to the young people themselves? We have hundreds of millions of users of mobiles - how can they leverage technology to take advantage of their own learning?
- Can English be taught to certain level formally - and then self-learnt thereafter? And what standards need to be set if learning English in future is to be pursued through a variety of formats.

These are big questions and big challenges for us all. But if, like me, your glass if half-full, I think a "Trinity" perspective on English, Skills and Employability provides some outstanding opportunities.

"There is no choice – we really do need to worry about English, Skills and Employability"

Prof Ananda Jayawardena, Vice Chancellor, University of Moratuwa, Sri Lanka

First of all there are 3 key questions we need to ask. Why should we worry about English, Skills and Employability at all? Are they a Trinity or trilemma? And only then do we ask how to address the challenge.

Why should we worry? In South Asia getting more students into higher education and then employment is the major issue. We have a social responsibility to transform the young into productive citizens and are under big pressure to make sure that they are employable. When it comes to skills, businesses tell us that they have lots of job opportunities but they can't find the right graduates to fill them. English is a universal language and is needed by young people and employers alike to gain competitive advantage. So there is no choice: we really do need to worry about English, Skills and Employability.

English Skills and Employability – is it a Trinity or Trilemma? If one knows about English and has skills, there is a confidence that one can be gainfully employed. But knowing English does not equate to having skills. And having skills does not mean that one has learnt English. These two are independent of one another but need to come together to work well for each other for the sake of employability. English, Skills and Employability is a Trinity for employers but potentially a Trilemma for educators like us. It's a big challenge we must meet.

So how do we meet the challenge? As educators, the first step is to understand the need for balance. We need to understand better employers' needs as wells as graduate attributes. And we need better alignment with other stakeholders to help us focus on employability. Do this and we will win the challenge.

WOMEN AND LEADERSHIP 'THE ABSENT REVOLUTION'

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Potential

- Currently only 3% of vice-chancellors in the region are women. If we want our universities to meet the challenges of Higher Education in South Asia – then rapid progress on the number of female researchers, professors and VCs is a prerequisite for success.
- The huge potential of untapped female talent needs to be translated into senior appointments and leadership positions in higher education institutions in South Asia and beyond.
- Women have arguably in the past not been assertive enough in their attitudes to equality. They now have the potential to be fiercer, bolder and more outspoken. Women who do succeed need to realise their potential to engender change for other women.

Challenges

- Female representation in research positions is poor, particularly in South Asia. Research suggests gender imbalance is not taken seriously enough at the highest levels - or by women themselves.
- Mobility has become an important factor in career advancement. For South Asian women in their twenties or thirties, moving away from home may simply not be an option.
- A high emphasis is placed on the role of networking to achieve recognition as a researcher. Yet here, too, women are heavily disadvantaged because of a lack of access to networks.
- The absence of structured interventions to develop women's leadership was widely reported. There were no formal mentoring arrangements, very few development programmes and no structured capacity-building or career advice.
- Studies of academic cultures point to the patriarchal nature of higher education institutions (HEIs). They are frequently represented as unfriendly and unaccommodating to women.

Solutions

These include:-

- Mainstreaming: Gender to be mainstreamed into higher education policy in relation to students and staff, with equality seen as a central constituent in quality.
- Policies and plans: Policies on gender equality and mainstreaming to be developed and accompanied by strategic action plans, resource allocation and reporting mechanisms. These should include time lines, goals/ performance indicators and effective evaluation procedures.
- Better recruitment: Recruitment and selection of senior leaders to be reviewed to aim for more transparency and accountability in decision-making.
- Building capacity for leadership This includes research-informed, women-only leadership development programmes; access to doctoral degrees; training and continuous professional development opportunities, mentorship programmes and networks.
- Inclusive leadership. This has been identified as a major enabler for more women in leadership positions. So those representing the status quo must be involved in the design of any solution.

POTENTIAL

The British Council's Global Education Dialogues (GED) conference "Women and Leadership" was held in Delhi in February 2015 to address the absence of Women in Leadership in Higher Education in South Asia. The twin pillars on which the "Women and Leadership" was built were two major pieces of British Council research, one in conjunction with the University of Sussex and the other in partnership with the Economist Intelligence Unit.

Over the next 10 years there will be another 700 universities built in South Asia. And every month for the next 12 years, there will be 1 million new entrants to the labour force. In asking where the lecturers, professors and vice-chancellors are going to come from to teach those progressing through Higher Education, one obvious source of talent potential is being overlooked - currently only 3% of vice-chancellors in the region are women. If we want our universities to meet the challenges of Higher Education in South Asia – then rapid progress on the number of female researchers, professors and VCs is a prerequisite for success.

In many countries, participation in education for women is now approaching parity with men at both secondary and undergraduate levels (and in some countries surpassing men). But this huge potential of untapped talent needs to be translated into senior appointments and leadership positions in higher education institutions globally.

Women have arguably in the past have not been assertive enough in their attitudes to equality. They now have the potential to be fiercer, bolder and more outspoken. Women who do succeed need to realise their potential to engender change for other women.

CHALLENGES

Research: Defined by absence - women and research in South Asia

This section is based on a custom research report - Defined by absence: Women & research in South Asia - commissioned by the British Council & conducted by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU)

Female representation in research positions is poor, particularly in South Asia. This research suggests gender imbalance is not taken seriously enough at the highest levels - or by women themselves & identifies solutions.

Key facts, issues and questions that arose from the discussion included:-

- A major barrier to female researchers is revealed by EIU Research
- The lack of women in HE leadership positions means that we are currently merely replicating an inherently biased system.
- 40% of PhDs in South Asia are women, but they are not then progressing into HE Research roles.
- Only 25% of the audience at this conference voted for quotas of female researchers.
- There is a fundamental flaw in our system – a failure of talent that needs 40% minimum target for researchers, academics and Professors alike.

The gender gap is closing in many parts of the world in terms of female access to education and enrolments at various levels of secondary and tertiary level. The World Economic Forum recently found that 105 countries had become more gender equal since 2005, but in critical roles—such as research positions - women are disappearing altogether.

It is clear that the role women play as researchers is critical to the quality of the research outcome. This fact is underlined by the push by governments and large research bodies to address this gender imbalance as a matter of urgency.

Based on a series of interviews conducted with global experts in 2014, the research shows that in South Asia, cultural restrictions and a lack of career opportunities play a major role in contributing to the gradual drop off of women researchers after PhD level. It also suggests that this gender imbalance is not being taken seriously enough at the highest levels or by the women themselves.

Quantity and quality go together. There are not enough women taking up careers in research in South Asia, and inequalities in the hiring process, unfavourable workplace practices and other institutional barriers may be to blame. Yet gender equality is increasingly being required of large-scale research bodies in developing countries: the more women in research labs, the better the quality of science and knowledge production.

Female education is on the increase. The last four decades have witnessed a boom in higher education enrolment globally, with a 46% increase in the East and South Asia region between 1970 and 2011:

- In India, the number of women in education has increased from 4.9% in 2005 to 8.7% in 2012. Women make up 42% of college graduates, accounting for 80% of the students enrolled in the biology and health sciences fields, but only 35% of students enrolled in engineering and physics degrees.
- In Nepal and Sri Lanka, enrolments in degree programmes have increased 10 times over the past four decades.
- In Bangladesh, the number of girls passing the secondary school certificate has risen significantly in the last decade, with student enrolments in higher education doubling over the last decade to around 2m. Here, more than 800,000 students are female.
- Even in Afghanistan, where women's access to education is restricted, total student participation in higher education grew more than threefold from 2002 to 2012, to around 150,000 students.

The missing female researcher

Women are massively underrepresented in the global workforce. In South Asia, female labour force participation has been steadily declining since 2005. India, for example, has one of the lowest rates of female labour participation in the world at 35%. When it comes to women and research these gaps in participation prove even more formidable, despite a higher number of women working as researchers in the fields of social sciences, the arts and humanities.

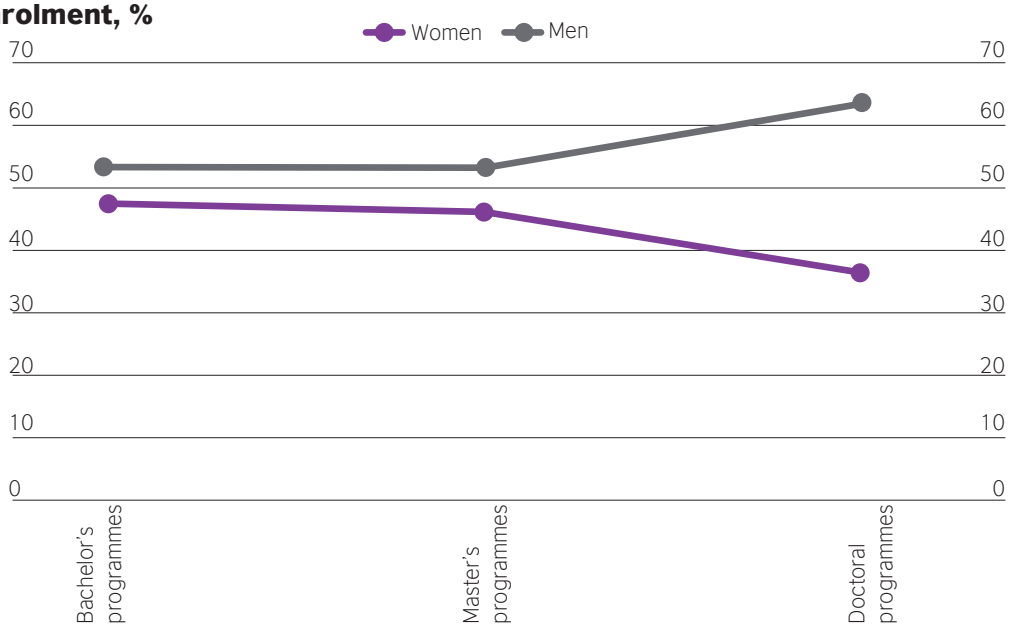
The STEM sector has always involved a large gender disparity. Despite positive action, there are still acute imbalances in both developed and developing economies. In South Asia, the problem is acute. The number of female researchers varies across the region, from 8% in Nepal to 37% in Sri Lanka. In Sri Lanka, a higher proportion of women researchers can be found in 'softer sciences', but far fewer in the engineering and technology sectors (only 27%) and social sciences (only 30%). In India, the percentage of women in research and science and engineering roles is just 15%.

The higher up the ladder you go in South Asia, the less visible women become. Only 3% of vice-chancellors in India are women, for example, with six of the 13 female vice chancellors found at women-only institutions. Some attribute this trend to the expectations placed on women in South Asian societies.

The higher they go, the rarer women are ...

In India, most potential women researchers are lost after undergraduate level, with fewer women taking up post-graduate studies. The representation of women falls from 40% to 25–30% at postgraduate level. This is a trend which permeates national boundaries. According to data collected by Scopus, the largest abstract and citation database of peer-reviewed literature, there were 175,282 authors based in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka who published in peer-reviewed journals in 2012. While Scopus does not collect data on gender, the Economist Intelligence Unit conducted some analysis to find approximately 20% of authors were female researchers.

Proportion of female and male enrolment by type of programme in Asian countries, 2011
Share of enrolment, %



Notes: Data cover 97% of higher education enrolment in the 26 countries or territories analysed in this report.
The percentage is a weighted average.

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, October 2013

Challenges for women

Lack of mobility. In today's globalised world, mobility has become an important factor in career advancement. For South Asian women in their twenties or thirties, moving away from home may simply not be an option.

Networks and recognition. A high emphasis is placed on the role of networking to achieve recognition as a researcher. Yet here, too, women are heavily disadvantaged because of a lack of access to networks.

Disaggregated data. A lack of data presents another problem. Scholars say that extensive and reliable gender data on the number of women PhDs in science, social sciences and arts is critical to retaining women in the workforce.

Rise of positive action. Yet despite these challenges, there are signs that the needle of progress is moving forward. The issue of gender balances has been championed from the very highest levels of government in South Asia. The India Government has a National Taskforce addressing Women in Science under the Department of Science and Technology, an initiative that has been running for 10 years.

If there was one thing you could do to improve the number of female researchers, what would it be?

"Government policy initiatives to raise awareness of the need for action"
Lynne Heslop, Senior Education Advisor, British Council, India

"Develop tools to change organisational culture."
Dr Nafees Meah, Director, Research Councils UK, India

"The easiest way to change is through the universities because that is directly under our control."
Professor Dwikorita Karnawati, Rector of Universitas Gadjah Mada (UGM), Indonesia

Proportion of South Asian women researchers to men by subject

29% Arts and humanities	27% Biochemistry, genetics and molecular biology	25% Social Science	25% Health professions	22% Business Management and accounting
18% Physics and astronomy	17% Mathematics	16% Earth and planetary sciences	16% Energy	15% Engineering

EIU analysis on data from Scopus (authors in peer-reviewed journals)

Female enrolment in tertiary education

2003	20.39	43.16	38.45	24.13	32.02
2011	24.27 Afghanistan	46.71 Pakistan	41.76 India	41.65 Nepal	40.45 Bangladesh

Source: UNESCO

Rejection, Refusal, Reluctance & Revisioning

This section is based around a report - Women in Higher Education Leadership in South Asia: Rejection, Refusal, Reluctance, Revisioning - commissioned by the British Council and conducted by the Centre for Higher Education and Equity Research (CHEER), University of Sussex, UK.

This research looks at the role of women in South Asia in respect to HE and leadership, seeking out existing knowledge and data, policies, change interventions, available statistics and interviews across South Asia.

Key facts, issues and questions that arose include:-

- A clear gender gap in terms of women's' access to Higher Education.
- An absence of authentic data, however, hampering meaningful evidence and hence action.
- Research suggests that women are not being identified and prepared for leadership.
- When women do aspire for leadership, they are frequently rejected from the most senior positions.
- Many women academics reluctant to aim for senior leadership, seeing it as unattractive.
- More women choose arts and humanities relative to STEM disciplines – may be hurting career options.

- Women aiming high, but lying low – pursuing career paths but not challenging structure in HE.
- The new narrative of leadership needs to be gender neutral.
- Success will come when "there's the same number of mediocre women as men in leadership positions"!
- Still not enough women in many countries to promote into leadership positions, but the pipeline has increased, in spite of the barriers and challenges.

Key facts, issues and questions that arose from the research included:-

- Gender needs to be mainstreamed into HE policy in relation to students and staff.
- Policies on gender equality and mainstreaming need to be accompanied by strategic action plans, resource allocation and reporting mechanisms, including timelines, performance indicators & evaluation.
- Policy needs should be informed by gender-disaggregated statistics that are updated regularly and made readily accessible. These need to be for HE staff across different employment categories.
- Policies on recruitment and selection of senior leaders need to be reviewed to aim for more transparency and accountability in decision-making.
- Investment in women's capacity-building essential in all countries. This includes research-informed, women-only leadership development programmes; access to doctoral degrees; training and continuous professional development opportunities, mentorship programmes and networks.
- Gender should be more closely integrated into research networks in the region.
- An urgent need to revision leadership to make it more attractive and hospitable to women and men, rather than focusing simply on counting more women into existing systems and structures.

Challenge in perspective: facts from India

Vijai Vardhan, Addl. Chief Secretary to Govt. Haryana, Higher Education Department, India says: Our state occupies less than 2% of India's population. The government tried to focus and incentivise more women to join colleges.

- In 105 government colleges. There are 74,000 women students but only 17,000 are pursuing pure sciences.
- In these colleges, there are 2200 lecturers and assistant professors and professors, of which 992 women and only 153 women are teaching science.
- The total of teaching staff in government universities run by the state is 991, out of which 450 women but in private universities we have 1000 women as teachers
- The number of women enrolled as students from undergraduate and postgraduate courses in maths and sciences in state universities is about 4300 and is private universities 782.
- The total number women sunning PhD's in STEM areas in state universities is only 224 and private universities the number goes down to 194.

What are the barriers to progress?

- The Power of the sociocultural: While there have been some women heads of state in the region (Sheikh Hasina is the current Prime Minister of Bangladesh and in 1960 in Sri Lanka, Sirimavo Bandaranaike was the first female Prime Minister in the world), women are largely still identified with the domestic sphere and with caring/nurturing, extended family roles.
- Lack of investment in women: The absence of structured interventions to develop women's leadership was widely reported. Successful senior women discussed how they had had to learn on the job, or seek out their own development -

often overseas. There were no formal mentoring arrangements, very few development programmes and no structured capacity-building or career advice.

- Organisational culture: Studies of academic cultures and reports in the interviews point to the patriarchal nature of higher education institutions (HEIs). They are frequently represented as unfriendly and unaccommodating to women. This is experienced as gender discrimination and bias, and in extreme terms, as gender based violence (symbolic and actual) on HE campuses including sexual harassment, and stalking.
- Perceptions of leadership: Many women in this study perceived leadership as a diversion from their commitment to research and scholarship, seeing it as a set of unattractive administrative functions requiring a 24/7 commitment in a globally competitive and performance-oriented academic culture. The few who had entered senior leadership were pleased with what they had been able to achieve, but stressed the lack of formal training and development for the position.
- Recruitment and selection: The appointment of leaders was often a political process, explicitly or implicitly, which required lobbying and the construction of highly visible public profiles. This often worked against women who were excluded from influential networks and coalitions because of their sex, domestic responsibilities or codes of sexual propriety.
- Family: Expectations of caregiving were described as constraining female engagement in HE careers. However, family support was also cited as critical to women academics' career progression.
- Gender and authority: The association of leadership with particular types of masculinity meant that many women do not think of themselves as leaders, or resist assuming positions which could leave them isolated and subject to hostility from colleagues who do not recognise their authority.

What are the enablers?

- New networks: Internationalisation and opportunities for mobility, networks and research partnerships. These contacts, not only provided resources, but also introduced women to new knowledge, contacts and professional approaches.
- New approaches: Institutional policies and practices including affirmative action, work/life balance and family-friendly interventions. However, it was thought essential that policies are accompanied by strategic implantation plans.
- New courses: Women-only leadership development courses that offer practical support, but are also at an appropriate theoretical and research-informed level for senior women academics. It is also essential that women and men were made more aware of how gender operates as a verb as well as a noun in academic life.
- New development: Professional Development e.g. opportunities for doctoral study, and regular updating and mentoring programmes at formal and informal levels and women-only learning spaces.

Mainstreaming – the rise of positive action

The linking of research funding to progress on gender equality recently in the UK was viewed as something of a watershed in higher education. Is it time now for gender to be mainstreamed into higher education policy in relation to students and staff, with equality seen as a central constituent of quality? What might this positive action look like? What has worked, what hasn't and why?

Key facts, issues and questions that arise include:-

- The mindset needs shifting – more work is needed to change perceptions, respect and security for women.
- Facilities – practical amenities are needed e.g. counselling/mentoring.
- Good work starts early – there's a clear need to educate and support women from girlhood to bring

them into the mainstream, report on opportunities.

- Self-checking – we have to be relentless in checking that our measurement and good intentions are not of themselves creating bias. We can't assume that measures in place are of themselves working. There's need for constant vigilance.
- Language – need to work on the language of leadership – we're constantly slipping into a male-dominated language.
- The self-effacement trap – women don't all lack self-esteem but many have a challenge with self-effacement. Too many times they're doing the job but not taking the credit.

Recruitment of Women into HE Leadership

Bringing transparency into the recruitment and selection processes for senior academic appointments has been cited as a major step in improving parity between men and women. Furthermore, the political influence over academic appointments in South Asia raises concerns about the quality of academic leadership, as well as adding layers of complexity to the appointments system.

What are the myths and realities of the appointment of senior staff in leadership roles in Higher Education, according to the experiences of those on the inside – the people doing the hiring and selection. Do the recruitment and selection processes for senior appointments inadvertently or deliberately militate against women achieving high office? And what attitudes, attributes, qualities and qualifications are required for today's leaders of higher education?

Key facts, issues and questions that arise from this section include:-

- In the UK, only 22% of professors are women.
- Minorities in organisations generally can suffer from "Imposter Syndrome" – "No one else here is like me. Should I be here? Am I good enough?" (see opinion from Patrick Johnson, Head of Equality and Diversity, University of Manchester, UK)
- Women must make a commitment to their own advancement.
- Institutions, similarly, must make a similar commitment to practise what they preach.
- Networks can be gender biased – so there is a clear need for female networks in HE for the development of a strong collective female voice.
- A mass of numbers is important to have role models to inspire and emulate.

The fortunes of women in HE versus other sectors

If you could make one change to the way academics are recruited, what would it be?

Patrick Johnson, Head of Equality and Diversity, University of Manchester, UK: **"Positive discrimination."**

Dr Fahima Aziz, VC, Asian University for Women, Bangladesh: **"That women have the quality & access to opportunities."**

Aloka Parasher Sen, Dean, School of Social Sciences, University of Hyderabad : **"More inclusive definitions of leadership."**

There is an emerging gender disparity when it comes to positions of leadership and influence in Higher Education contrasted with their counterparts in business and other sectors. Whilst women are beginning to break the glass ceilings in other walks of life, scaling the ivory towers is still seen as precarious and the preserve of men. This session contrasts the fortunes of HE with its counterparts in industry, finance, civil society, the arts and other professions. What best practice exists outside of academia? What works, what doesn't and why?

Key facts, issues and questions that arise in this section include:-

- The number of women coming into HE in South Asia

is currently phenomenal and so the current period is key to changing the template – for women in leadership positions.

- The hiring of women still happens on comparisons with and assumptions of male leadership.
- Women are too self-effacing and don't take the credit for their own achievements.
- Women, as well as men, can be guilty of unconscious bias against women.
- Technology can and will play a positive role for women in work-life balance.

In many countries in the world are you more likely managed by woman than a man. In the UK, 34% of women are managers, in Sri Lanka the figure is 28%, with 15% in Bangladesh and less than 3% of owners and managers in Pakistan were women. These positive trends are not matched in academia.

Are quotas the answer for women in HE leadership?

"Recently I've come to understand … that quotas will allow many more women to come through."
Ms Jude Kelly CBE, Artistic Director of the Southbank Centre

"Quotas are a way to stop a self-replicating system."
Ms Lalitha Kumaramangalam, Chairperson, National Commission on Women, India

"Quotas are a dream but not the priority. The priority is to be given the opportunities."
Professor Dwikorita Karnawati, Rector of Universitas Gadjah Mada (UGM), Indonesia.

Approximately 25% of the audience in the British Council's "Women and Leadership" GED in New Delhi favoured a quota system for women in HE leadership positions.

How do we identify bias?

This session relates to identifying bias, for example, in curricular and the importance of including gender as a category in all disciplines, as well as introducing specific areas of scholarship such as gender and women's studies. Key facts, issues and questions that arose from the discussion included:-

- Good intentions of society are too frequently overrun by deep-rooted cultural norms;
- Gender needs to be a category across all disciplines- but at the moment it is arts and humanities biased. It needs to feature in STEM disciplines as well;
- Women haven't been involved in the process of knowledge creation. Therefore it is more difficult to fix male-centric mind sets. Very little research or design of research by women, again especially in sciences.
- Number of women teachers increasing by the day but number of teachers increasing much faster.
- Women's role as catalyst for change not yet embedded but really needs to be.
- Informal approach will help in fixing the knowledge – taking up opportunities for informal workshops to show case and inspire women's knowledge.
- Lack of data a major problem.

Women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM)

Sharing experiences, challenges and best practice

This session was be focused on identifying, adopting, and sharing the most effective methods and "best practices" in addressing the challenges women in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) careers face in different organisational settings in various countries.

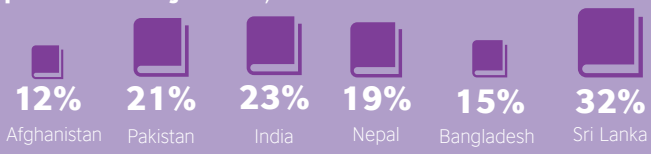
Key facts, issues and questions that arose from the discussion included:-

- The problem is less that so many women are not competing, but that they are not even applying for roles.

- The challenge to application for roles is not just childcare, but also eldercare.
- Certain areas of STEM disciplines are much harder than others to penetrate i.e. the cultural difficulty for women to break into offshore engineering roles.
- The key strategies suggested include:-
  - o Using role models;
  - o Effective STEM leadership programmes;
  - o Strong voice for women at the highest level; and
  - o Sufficient access for women to funding.

According to an analysis of authors published in peer-reviewed journals in South Asian countries between 12% to 32% of articles published in each countries had a female authors. And where do they publish, they publish more in arts and social sciences, and less in more science subjects such as mathematics and engineering.

Proportion of articles with female authors published in peer reviewed journals, 2012



EIU analysis on data from Scopus (authors in peer-reviewed journals)

SOLUTIONS

Women and Leadership: Key Actions from Global Education Dialogue

Actions from New Delhi GED research from University of Sussex

- Mainstreaming: Gender to be mainstreamed into higher education policy in relation to students and staff, with equality seen as a central constituent in quality.
- Policies and plans: Policies on gender equality and mainstreaming to be developed and accompanied by strategic action plans, resource allocation and reporting mechanisms. These should include time lines, goals/ performance indicators and effective evaluation procedures.
- Better Stats: Policy to be informed by gender-disaggregated statistics that are updated regularly and made readily accessible. These need to be for HE staff across different employment categories.
- Better recruitment: recruitment and selection of senior leaders to be reviewed to aim for more transparency and accountability in decision-making. Developing Women.
- Building capacity for leadership This includes research-informed, women-only leadership development programmes; access to doctoral degrees; training and continuous professional development opportunities, mentorship programmes and networks.

Actions agreed on Organisational Culture, Recruitment &Selection

1. Clear need for more data – in all organisations and measured at both:--
   a. A Global level – need to lobby World Bank & UNESCO for standardised data with global reach; and
   b. A National level – direct lobbying of state as well as national governments for maximum impact.
2. Lobbying campaign for mandatory self-archiving of gender data by every institution – with a Government buy-in through Awards for Gender Equality.
3. Recommend Quotas at Government level in Quality Assurance Agencies – in order to set appropriate standards for women.

Actions agreed on New Leadership Models

Inclusive leadership identified as a major enabler for more women in leadership positions. So those representing the status quo must be involved in the design of any solution. Actions therefor include:--

1. A mandatory new course for inclusive leadership; and
2. A completely new approach to communications around gender and leadership - based around genuine two-way communication, as inclusivity in the debate is essential for "stickability" of solution.

Actions agreed on Changing Cultural Attitudes

1. Development of a comprehensive "Sensitisation" Programme – based around simple key questions such as "Would you want that for your daughters?"
2. Media campaign mirroring famous "Boys Don't Cry" ad campaign, based on need to target girls at an early enough age to implant positive vision of women in leadership positions.

Actions agreed on Professional Development

1. Lobby funding agencies to support women in post-doctoral positions via extended periods of tenure during career break. This already works effectively for women in some India universities - and can potentially have a large and much wider impact.
2. Extensive career development workshops - modelled on Leadership Development programme at University of Southampton - where working female scientists give their time for free to minimise need for investment from Government agencies. Mentors must be men as well as women.
3. Policy initiatives to be connected to future funding to increase incentive to act.

IMPACTS

THE BRITISH COUNCIL AT WORK

Giving women new hope – Pakistan Scottish Scholarships Scheme

Zainab Tariq, from Balochistan, is pursuing an MA in Educational Leadership and Management under the Pakistan Scottish Scholarships Scheme implemented by the Education team at British Council in Pakistan. She says: "My family and I were forced to migrate four years ago. We were suffering financially and mentally so I was unable to continue my education. When I heard about the scholarship, it came as a real blessing to me and it changed my life".

Zainab is one of over 100 young women who have been awarded scholarships under the scheme. Bright, hard-working young women belonging to disadvantaged backgrounds and hailing from areas all over Pakistan have won awards under the scheme to pursue master's courses in education, sustainable energy, and food security and agriculture.

The Pakistan Scottish Scholarships Scheme was initiated in 2013 with funds from the Scottish Government, and is implemented by the Education team at British Council Pakistan. It has been a means to an end with remarkable impact. The beneficiaries include young women studying away from home as well as those who are unable to travel far from their places of residence. Also included are those who have faced bereavement, divorce and the challenges of living without a male family member in an overwhelmingly patriarchal society, as well as those who belong to areas affected by conflict, natural disasters and abject poverty.

This success has led to the scaling up of the scheme to include scholarships at the school level in 2014. Scholarships for both boys and girls have been offered for the first time this year, reaching over 1,300 students in primary and secondary schools nationwide. Through the provision of financial aid, the scheme endeavours to assist underprivileged schoolchildren in overcoming barriers related to access, retention, quality and gender and social parity. Given that Pakistan has the second largest number of out of school children in the world, this effort is more pertinent than ever.

Children who have been awarded to date have inspirational stories to tell of their experiences. Areeba Yousaf, age 15, belongs to rural Azad Jammu and Kashmir, in north-east Pakistan and walks 1.5 kilometres every day just to get to school. Even when limits of physical endurance and mobility cannot stop such students, the lack of financial stability is enough of an obstacle. For these students, the scholarship supplements their efforts and enthusiasm, and attempts to go some way in ameliorating the challenges of an education system and environment that has brought Pakistan to a state of what has been called an 'education crisis' on various platforms.

What is even more inspiring is the determination and ambition of the students who have won the scholarship and want to give back the same way. This is best shown by the young women who have just now completed a year under the scheme. Zainab Tariq states, "Balochistan is one of the places where people are still deprived of basic educational facilities and I will try to play my part to help them get their basic right as a human being."

Armed with postgraduate degrees and overwhelming ambition, the award-holders illustrate the words of the World Bank Chief Economist, who proclaimed that, "Investment in girls' education may well be the highest return investment available in the developing world". The Pakistan Scottish Scholarships Scheme proves to do just that.

For additional information and a quick look at how the scheme has benefited Pakistani post-graduate students, a short video can be viewed at: http://www.britishcouncil.pk/scholarships-0

OPINION

Opinion: When will the absent revolution begin?

- Peter Upton CMG, Country Director Pakistan, British Council

Our EIU research shows a rise in female participation in higher education has been driven by rising incomes, the creation of a rapidly growing market for higher skilled graduates and gradually changing attitudes regarding women in Higher Education. However, female enrolment in postgraduate degree programmes has not risen rapidly and women researchers in particular are noticeable by their absence. There are 3 things going on here ...

- Women are being stripped out of the higher education system. Currently, in South Asia female enrolment in tertiary education is cruising at 40% - it should be a breakthrough moment. In the last 8 to 10 years there's been a massive increase in female enrolment. You would think the roots of progression are taking hold. In India, 50% of the PhDs are being taken by women and across South Asia the figure is about 35%. Women, however, may be doing PhD but are becoming stripped out of the system before they become researchers. In Pakistan, the proportion of female researchers to PhD drops to 21% from 46%. In the India to 23%, in Nepal to 19%, Bangladesh to 15%, and Afghanistan to 12%.
- A bias towards Arts and Humanities. Not only does the volume of female researchers fall sharply, but where they go is towards in arts and humanities. So what we're seeing is a duality of female researchers not moving through - and when they do, they move predominantly into the social sciences.
- Then there is funding. The female researchers may be in arts and humanities but research funding is flowing to STEM disciplines - and this means that access to funding networks is severely limited for females.

What's missing are:-

- Leadership programmes for women. While there are good individual programmes there are no national programs at researcher level.
- Mentorship. Women say they need good role models and mentorship.
- Strong voices at the highest level. Vice-chancellors need strong interventions at policy level to harness the talent pool. Unless we do, a flawed system will be self-replicating.

There is a flaw in a system that actually denies access to women to reach leadership roles in our universities. Not only is this a business failure and an academic failure and a cultural failure. It is a talent failure. If we want our universities to reflect Higher Education in South Asia - then 40% is the very minimum for researchers and professors and VCs. This is the challenge – the question is what we will do about it – and when will the revolution begin?

Opinion: "Women owe it to themselves to find out about their real history"

- Jude Kelly CBE, Artistic Director of the Southbank Centre

All my life, I've enjoyed the emotional and intellectual discourse between women and girls. We're not living in the first era where women and girls have been a force for change and the story of humans has to be one of men and women together. But my time as a theatre director has been against a backdrop that the only big and important stories around are about men and boys.

I was born in Liverpool, one of four daughters. When I was a little girl, Indira Gandhi was Prime Minister of India and Golda Meir was Prime Minister of Israel. We had women politicians, including Jenny Lee and Barbara Castle in the UK. My father chose to encourage us to our utmost potential. What role did your fathers play? My guess is that many of you had fathers who were very supportive. My own observations tell me that when fathers believe that daughters can do something the latter's confidence grows exponentially. As a little girl, if you're brought up being told that the world is your oyster then you believe it. Girls face emotional obstacles far more significant than technical barriers. Self-belief is what drives women and girls forward.

I remember a teacher telling us about geniuses he said that the human brain is different for men and women and

that men are more likely to be geniuses, whereas women's brains are more average. I jumped up and told him it couldn't be true. He asked me to name a woman genius. I said: "Marie Curie" and he said name another. And I couldn't. It made me realise that I had never been told the history of women's' and girls' achievements.

That is still the case. Women owe it to themselves to find out about their real history and understand that the struggle for equality has gone on for thousands of years. Did you know that Florence Nightingale was not just the "Lady with the Lamp"? She was a statistician - the first woman who was able to explain through statistics what was actually happening, and bring about changes in the health remedies that she was offering. I was told that she went round with a candle ministering to men. I had no idea she was a mathematician. There are so many examples of women who changed the course of history, only to find that history closes over them. It leads me to ask myself whether we are being too docile in our attitudes to equality. The world is becoming accustomed to using the term "racism" and recognising that society has to address it. We are now having those same conversations about the world "patriarchy."

Opinion: "Where is the data?"

- Dr Barbara Crossouard, Senior Lecturer in Education, University of Sussex

When we undertook our research, we had hoped to analyse women in higher education across the region. But we found a dearth of data. Some countries had overall figures for academic employment. Some countries had disaggregated that by gender. Very few had disaggregated data by gender and by employment category. Data focused on students rather than staff.

We scoured websites but it failed to identify databases. We asked academic colleagues for additional statistics that were not publicly reported but this least allowed us to generate some analysis. The British Council helped by using their contacts through ministries to help us find more data. This suggested that data was available but not being shared as a matter of habit.

It's important to collect this data because it really does impact on the policy-making process. From the data we did have, we could see no linear trends in women's leadership. In Bangladesh, for example, data showed no particular trend and contradicted the pipeline theory. Sri Lanka did publish gender disaggregated stats for women by employment category. But that showed that in one year it increased in different in institutions, but then fell again the following year. In Afghanistan, the number of academics who were women expanded greatly but so did the number of education establishments. It was also clear from the Sri Lanka data that women tend to disappear the further up the education ladder they go. Women are stripped out of the system the higher you go.

Overall, the lack of data suggests a grave lack of policy concern for this important issue. The key thing across the region is to develop a more systematic database through which we can have way to critique what is happening.

Opinion: "Many believe they are recruiting in a fair way even though they are not."

- Patrick Johnson, Head of Equality and Diversity, University of Manchester, UK

In the UK, 17% of Vice-Chancellors are women - and that figure is beginning to move slowly upwards. So what are the factors that are stopping faster move towards more representation in senior leadership and UK universities?

- Unconscious bias. Many genuinely believe that they are recruiting in a fair way even though they are not. A few years ago, for example, a symphony orchestra found itself dominated by men, in spite of a genuinely-held belief that the audition panel process was fair. It was only when the selection process began to hold blind auditions-where the panel could not see the person who was auditioning -that there was a dramatic increase in the proportion of women who passed the audition.

- Imposter syndrome. Many women feel inferior if they are in a small minority in a leadership team – the same is true of any other underrepresented group. There is a tendency for them to begin to feel "lucky" to be

where they are and doubt whether that they can move on to greater things. They don't feel as though they can move upwards if they don't see other people like them.

- Not everybody wants to be a leader. Leaders in HE need to like budgetary and the other responsibilities that go with senior management positions. Many women choose to specialise in a particular direction, rather than become a broad-based manager or leader.

At the University of Manchester we have a good representation of women at undergraduate level (52%) although the figure slips for lecturers (45%), senior lecturers (35%) and professors (22%). We believe that female networks are very important to help women develop their leadership aspirations. It's very difficult indeed for a lone woman to influence the debate – but we have a Women's Professor Network whose collective voice is very strong. We think that the strength of the collective voice is also felt when there are 30% of women in leadership team – it's a sort of magic number beyond which female representation begins to make a real difference.

Opinion: Ms Anuradha Das Mathur, Founder and Director, 9.9 Media, India

The first thing that strikes me is that those in higher education could be thinking that the grass being greener on the other side over in business. In fact, across sectors and geographies, we are all focused on working out why women don't progress far enough up the career path. This is a universal challenge and certainly not specific to higher education.

This debate is moving centre stage not just through fairness and justice but also for business reasons. Women are about half the population – this is not about ethnic minorities or small populations. This is not a diversity and inclusion issue - this is about half of the talent available going untapped. Men are coming into the conversation for another reason – because they want the choice to be at home, just as women want the choice to be at work.

Opinion: Can Unconscious Bias work both ways?

- Dr Rajani Gupte, VC, Symbiosis International University

We are assuming that when we talk about fixing biases we are always talking about male biases. This is not always the case. We have 28 institutions in our University - and 12 of them are led by women. So when I'm looking to recruit do I feel more comfortable about recruiting other women – and so do I also suffer from an unconscious bias?

If I was looking to fix gender bias from any source, I would begin with talking to children from a very early age. This can be highly effective. Young children for example are very health-conscious today: they go to the gym and want to be fit and healthy. This change has happened in one generation of education - surely we can do the same thing in making sure that we help children to change their attitudes to women and holding leadership positions.

RESEARCH AND RELEVANCE

Research networks, talent management, and the quest for international relevance

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Potential

- South Asia's research capacity has been increasing but international collaborations have huge potential to go to match the intensity seen in other regions.
- Networks are an extremely important part of building intellectual capacity. Increasing amounts of research investment are focused on creating knowledge transfer and innovative partnerships with industry.
- Research networks help to alter the economic paradigm in South Asian countries, away from a low-value production and export model, towards indigenous innovation and productivity as economic drivers.

Challenges

- In South Asia, science and high-tech research collaboration with industry tends to be driven by governments. Neither academia nor the private sector has a strong tradition of applied research and companies are risk-averse when it comes to investing in capital- intensive research and development (R&D).
- Funding for social sciences and the arts tend to rely heavily on volatile international funds, despite the potential for these disciplines to improve policy-making, promote social cohesion and build innovative societies.
- Due to limited human resources, funding for collaborative research becomes concentrated among a small academic elite, usually foreign-trained. This group, as a result, can end up over-burdened. Meanwhile, higher education institutions beyond the top tier are neglected.
- Industry is relatively underrepresented within South Asian international research collaborations. Industry participation is crucial to gaining a complete understanding of issues -then driving innovation and breakthroughs

Solutions

- Data – there are knowledge gaps in the extent and nature of research collaboration. There is a need for more comprehensive data.
- Start small – HE institutions should start with small collaborations, as they're much easier to get off the ground.
- Think broad – scale disciplinary divides i.e. linguists working with computer scientists.
- Achieving growth – there is a need to pay greater attention to education and invest greater amounts of funding into R&D.
- Financial support - A range of government tax incentives and legal mandates need to also increase to help companies increase their involvement in research outcomes.
- Strategic focus - There is a strong argument in favour of government leadership in research networks to develop new industries, particularly in science and technology.
- Social mobility - International research networks need to contribute to social mobility for South Asian researchers. Younger and female researchers are able to take on more responsibilities and progress their careers though participation in international networks.
- Intra-regional networks - There would be great advantages to more cross-regional research collaboration, given the similar conditions and challenges faced across South Asia. They can also foster improved diplomatic relations.

POTENTIAL

This Global Education Dialogue (GED) held in Lahore in May 2014, the first of the South Asia Second Series events, brought together key stakeholders and influencers in the region to debate the challenges and opportunities created through Research and Collaboration in Higher Education.

South Asia's research capacity has been increasing but international collaborations have huge potential to go to match the intensity seen in other regions. The H-index is a measure of scientific productivity and a common measure of strength of research output. The US for example, has an H-index of 934. India, the most advanced of South Asian countries, has an H-index of 341.

H-index in South Asian Countries 2013

Source: Scimago

British Council interest in a GED on Research and Collaboration in South Asia comes from the belief in its huge potential for growth and prosperity in the region. Networks are an extremely important part of building intellectual capacity. Increasing amounts of research investment are focussed on creating knowledge transfer and innovative partnerships with industry.

Research networks help to alter the economic paradigm in South Asian countries, away from a low-value production and export model, towards indigenous capacity-building, innovation and productivity as economic drivers.

The main policy driver of research networks in South Asia is capacity-building, owing to a shortage of research skills among university faculty. International links form the cornerstone of this strategy, and the partnerships formed as a result will accelerate the shift towards collaborative, impact-focused research.

CHALLENGES

Research: Analysing international research collaborations in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka

This section is based around a research report commissioned by the British Council from the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU)

Research networks help to alter the economic paradigm in South Asian countries, away from a low-value production and export model, towards indigenous capacity-building, innovation and productivity as economic drivers.

The main policy driver of research networks in South Asia is capacity-building, owing to a shortage of research skills among university faculty. International links form the cornerstone of this strategy, and the partnerships formed as a result will accelerate the shift towards collaborative, impact-focused research.

In South Asia, science and high-tech research collaboration with industry tends to be driven by governments. Unlike in the developed world, neither academia nor the private sector has a strong tradition of applied research, and companies are risk-averse when it comes to investing in capital- intensive research and development (R&D). Governments select focus areas, invest in infrastructure and facilities, employ government researchers and offer incentives for entrepreneurs—in the hope of creating more employment opportunities for the many young people entering the job market each year. India stands out in that it also attracts significant interest from developed countries hoping to commercialise their innovations for India's large and growing pool of consumers.

In science and technology, research networks are highly reliant on public funding, but this is expected to change. Flagship innovation-focused collaborations between researchers and industry in South Asia are, for now, mostly government-funded, yet they aim to become more self-sufficient in future. They hope to attract more domestic and international private-sector funding as they prove their value, and also to generate revenue through consultancy, training, patents and spin-off enterprises.

Funding for social sciences and the arts tend to rely heavily on volatile international funds, despite the potential for these disciplines to improve policy-making, promote social cohesion and build innovative societies. Applied research in social sciences and the arts is harder to convert into a revenue stream. However, social sciences have a strong role to play in moving South Asian countries towards more evidence-based policy-making and effective policy implementation in order to address their myriad development challenges.

Private-sector investment in collaborative research is desirable in some cases, but is not a panacea. Private-sector investors need to ensure a return on their outlay by means of intellectual property rights. This can work well for commercialisation of certain new products and techniques, but is less desirable in the context of socially-and development-oriented research.

Due to limited human resources, funding for collaborative research becomes concentrated among a small academic elite, usually foreign-trained. This group, as a result, can end up over-burdened. Meanwhile, higher education institutions beyond the top tier are neglected.

Geopolitics constrain collaborative research between countries in South Asia. Research partners from outside the region can act as a neutral party, bringing together participants from countries which have thorny relationships. While purely South Asian research networks do exist, academics note the many hurdles slowing down such initiatives.

Security concern is a major challenge to those trying to run research networks involving Afghanistan and Pakistan. Not only have years of insecurity held back the development of the tertiary education sector and led to a continued 'brain-drain', but ongoing security threats limit the willingness or ability of overseas researchers to visit.

Research networks – asset or liability?

"Research networks can play an important role but the virtues of networks are not always clear cut. The pluses or minuses of research collaboration often depends upon whose ideas are heard, driving ideas into action and accountability. So are they an asset or liability?

Dr Faisal Aftab, Director Research and Development Office, Bahria University:

It's good that research is being transformed from isolated movements to situations where stakeholder across academia government and industry form more formal alliances, collaborations and cooperation. Concerns about such collaborations are often grounded around whether you are inside or outside the network.

Professor Deepika Bhaskar, University of Delhi, India on Funding Research Networks -

Research collaboration isn't helped by decision makers. The problem with applied research is that it gets stuck in bureaucracy – funding is subject to local policies and these are different wherever you go. In addition, there are clear constraints on the mobility of scientists – the same problem may be being addressed by scientists across the world and they might not know it. We don't want 15 similar labs in South Asia. We'd rather have a few who could all share their knowledge.

Dr Mohammad Nizamuddin, Vice Chancellor, University of Gujrat, Pakistan -

What I realise is that we have all kinds of excuses for not building research infrastructure for universities. We talk about lack of funding, lack of capacity searches and lack of research areas. In Pakistan some development of research has taken place but not as much as we need. There's been more focus on science and technology, but not much on public policy on social sciences.

BUILDING NEW RESEARCH NETWORKS

Research: A Mighty Web: How Research Collaborations Foster Growth in South Asia - British Council & EIU

This section is based around a research report commissioned by the British Council from the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU)

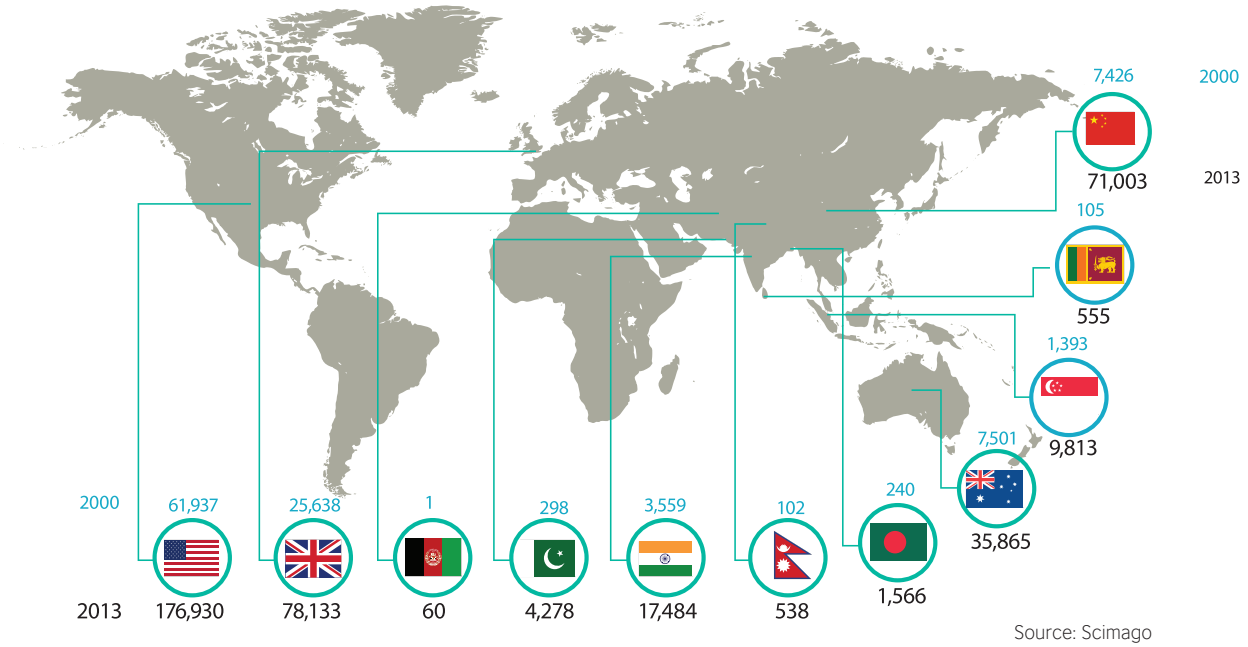
In Asia, the research landscape is dynamic and burgeoning, with its researchers making significant contributions in R&D, manufacturing and exports, science, mathematics, technology, social science, and arts and design. But even so, the country contributes less than 1% of its GDP to R&D.

There is much that its constituent countries can learn from each other through closer academic and research collaboration. Governments are providing more opportunities for overseas research, more international programmes, and more ways to work with other countries collaboratively. But policies still lag behind the changes driving them.

South Asian countries need to take serious steps to enhance their technological readiness and innovation. Universities, institutes and local research and development (R&D) agencies in the region lag behind their counterparts in the rest of Asia in terms of R&D and technological enhancement activities, confirming the need for governments and firms to rethink their policies and strategies in this regard.

Possible solutions include creating opportunities for greater engagement and connectivity between the business world and universities, better funding of higher education provision to match research skills shortages, and increasing tax incentives or legal mandates to engage in R&D. There is great potential for foreign providers to help fill the gap between capacity and demand. However, in some countries such as India this potential has been hampered by bureaucratic obstacles and long delays in gaining approval to operate.

International research collaborations
Total number of documents with international collaborations



Source: Scimago

Nevertheless, the potential remains very strong and South Asia continues to represent an exciting 'frontier market' for international research institutions.

The value of collaborative research. Collaborative research across borders and disciplines can help drive economic development and productivity in developing countries through the discovery of scientific breakthroughs and innovations linked to health, agriculture, chemistry and engineering, as well as raise awareness of social issues such as poverty, urbanisation and environmental security.

Information sharing among researchers is also crucial to acquiring essential knowledge and skills, and drawing on different perspectives to solve a shared problem. In turn, it can lead to capacity building in developing countries. This is especially important for South Asia, which has significantly fewer high-quality universities compared with countries such as the US, Australia and the UK. Further to this, international research collaborations offer cost-saving benefits. For example, when countries can pool resources, labour, equipment and facilities, researchers are less reliant on funding from governments and overseas bodies.

An obvious way to measure the impact of scientific research is to look at the number of papers published in each country. While there has been an increase in scientific output across South Asia over the past five decades, the region's share as a whole is almost insignificant when set against the exponential growth of its population. India is the only exception—it ranks among the top 10 countries in the world in terms of its research output.

International collaboration and South Asia. An estimated one-fifth of the world's scientific papers are co-authored internationally, reflecting how much researchers value being able to partner with experts in other countries. But there is also a lack of coordination of information in the South Asia region, with a lot of overlap and replication of research data. Yet these countries tend to collaborate more often with researchers from countries outside South Asia than with those in their own region.7 Take India, for example, which is well connected to Germany, Japan, the UK and the US. But in South Asia, just 2.2% of all international collaborations involve countries within the region.

Most of the countries in South Asia face similar kinds of challenges, so collaborative research would be the

ideal way to transfer insights and information about dealing with these challenges from one country to the next.

The industry challenge. Industry is relatively underrepresented within South Asian international research collaborations. Just as multidisciplinary research combines different perspectives and methodologies to solve a problem, industry participation is crucial to gaining a complete understanding of issues—then driving innovation and breakthroughs. There are various reasons why industries might be reluctant to get involved in research collaborations. For example, funding is a concern for companies that already have internal R&D functions. Ownership of new innovations and intellectual property rights is another issue. And there is often a huge divide between the objectives of industry players and researchers when they each engage in research programmes.

Government incentives. Another way to get industry involved in research collaborations could be through tax incentives or legal mandates. For example, India is the first country to implement corporate social responsibility (CSR) legislation that directs companies to invest 2% of their profits in CSR. In Pakistan, too, the government offers tax deductions to encourage private R&D, involving tax credits and the expensing of R&D.

What does the 21st century researcher look like?

The skills sets needed to make impact at an international level are both complex and multi-faceted. What capabilities do researchers need to participate in research collaboration and tackle the complex challenges South Asia?

Nishat Riaz, Director Education, British Council, Pakistan - Researchers are no ordinary human beings. Their contributions will be making a big difference the life of people, the environment, our infrastructure, technology and much else besides. Researchers are increasingly required to be skilled communicators at a regional, national and international level.

Dr Mohammad Nizamuddin, Vice Chancellor, University of Gujrat, Pakistan - The nature of research teams within universities is changing and this is a factor. You build research knowledge by building research teams rather than by an individual going off by themselves to study for months.

Professor Aysha Iqbal, Indian Institute of Technology, Madras, India - One thing that very common across the world is that we insist a lot on researchers proving themselves through publication in quality journals. Will universities be prepared for the demands on researchers?

The nature of Knowledge Parks

There are currently 125 “Knowledge Cities”, over 175 “Science Parks” and nearly 330 “Learning Cities” across the world. The power of knowledge environments to act as a catalyst to innovation, creativity and economic mobility is already recognised. Now the region needs to get to grips with what the knowledge parks could mean for the hundreds of new universities to be created in South Asia in the next decade. Are Knowledge Parks an entity in themselves or part of a bigger picture?

Professor Dr Sohail H Naqvi, Vice Chancellor, Lahore University of Management Sciences, Pakistan: You don’t take an area, put a fence around it and call it a “Knowledge Park”. It’s about using sharing knowledge to reap an economic benefit beyond its physical boundaries. It is not a laboratory experiment. And it’s also something that needs to involve an element of chaos - young people, energy, support and lots of nurturing to help something to happen.

Professor Marliyn Leask, Professor of Educational Knowledge Management, University of Bedfordshire: My particular passion is in the way virtual and online systems help to make the Knowledge Park a “live” environment across the world. Having the networks to bring Knowledge Parks alive is critical. Without that network a Knowledge Park is going to be isolated, unable to have a role on a bigger stage.

SOLUTIONS

RESEARCH & COLLABORATION: KEY ACTIONS FROM THE GLOBAL EDUCATION DIALOGUES

Key actions from the London GED – "Revolution and Realities in the New Economic Order"

From the London GED discussion:-

- Research and collaboration – there are clear benefits from international research collaboration, including cost sharing, filling skills gaps, technology transfer, and different perspectives on shared problems.
- Culture - Collaboration has a benefit also as facilitator of good diplomatic relations and eliminating stereotypes.
- Data – there are knowledge gaps in the extent and nature of research collaboration. There is a need for more comprehensive data.
- Start small – HE institutions should start with small collaborations, as they're much easier to get off the ground.
- Think broad – scale disciplinary divides i.e. linguists working with computer scientists.

Key Actions from the London GED Research

- Achieving growth – there is a need to pay greater attention to education and invest greater amounts of funding into R&D.
- More dialogue - there's also a role for the international community to play in facilitating conferences and forums that bring governments, academics and industries together to network and build the basis for potential collaborations.
- Financial support - A range of government tax incentives and legal mandates need to also increase to help companies increase their involvement in research outcomes.

Key messages from the Lahore GED research – *"Research and Relevance: Research networks, talent management and the quest for international relevance"*

- Capacity building - Research networks play an important role in training and capacity-building, and sometimes in reversing the 'brain-drain'. While ideas, resources and subject expertise are shared in both directions, researchers in developing countries play a particularly important role in training South Asian partners in research methodologies and how to apply for international funding—making it possible for more people to develop careers in research without leaving the region.
- Strategic focus - In South Asia, research networks contribute to economic development by kick-starting strategic industries and, in a broader sense, altering the culture to be more innovation-focused. There is a strong argument in favour of government leadership in research networks to develop new industries, particularly in science and technology.
- Social mobility - International research networks contribute to social mobility for South Asian researchers. Younger and female researchers are able to take on more responsibilities and progress their careers though participation in international networks.
- Intra-regional networks - There are great advantages to cross-regional research collaboration, given the similar conditions and challenges faced across South Asia. They can also foster improved diplomatic relations. Whether purely South Asian, or enabled by external facilitators, regional cooperative efforts are increasingly being encouraged in government planning—particularly in the fields of agriculture and health.

IMPACTS

THE BRITISH COUNCIL AT WORK

Sharing Knowledge - The University-Community Engagement Project

The British Council has been active in the Higher Education (HE) sector since we were established in Bangladesh in 1952, creating opportunities for the Bangladesh students, forging links between UK and Bangladesh universities, and generating research and exchange programmes, conducting high level policy dialogues and seeking facilitating partnerships and collaborations which will promote enriching mutual experiences between these two countries. The University Grants Commission of Bangladesh (UGC) is our strategic partner in our HE initiatives and activities.

Among the most exciting HE projects that we have initiated recently is the 'University- Community Engagement Project'. Its genesis was the Regional and Bangladesh Policy Dialogue on "Building Bridges between Universities and Communities".

The underlying concept of this project is that communities should benefit from the knowledge, research findings and skills that Universities generate, and that in turn Universities should learn from the experiences and life of their local communities. There is a reciprocal relationship of knowledge exchange here that needs to be exploited to the full so that both parties benefit, economically, socially, professionally and culturally. This is what has been termed 'the knowledge economy'. Universities can act as the key drivers for the knowledge economy – the prime contributors to economic growth and improvement in the living conditions of communities.

In Bangladesh, there has been notable progress in the engagement of Universities with the social sector, particularly in agriculture and medicine. The British Council, in partnership with the UGC, started the new 'Building Bridges' initiative - ten University-Community pilot projects. Building on these initial steps we have provided grants for another six projects in partnership with Action Aid Bangladesh. These projects include areas such as Climate Change, Agriculture, Livelihoods, English Language teaching, Waste Management, Biogas Production and Renewable Energy.

Hence, we organised our 'Building Bridges' Exhibition in October 2013 in Dhaka in partnerships with UGC, Action Aid, Higher Education Quality Enhancement Project (HEQEP) of the Government of Bangladesh and World Bank. This is a showcase event and our way of disseminating the impact of these projects both in the Universities and the

communities.

The 'exhibition' received spontaneous support and attendance from key policy makers in Education, Vice-Chancellors, senior academics, and researchers, and representatives from donors, civil society, the media and the project participants.

The British Council supports this initiative and collaborates with the UK government, Bradford University and Salford University to develop knowledge exchange strategies and policies which would then create an enabling environment for Universities in Bangladesh to continue to work with businesses and wider society. Our aim is to see that the Universities in Bangladesh will adopt this initiative as a fundamental component of the HE curriculum.

OPINION

Opinion: "Networks are an extremely important part of building intellectual capacity"

- Michelle Potts, Director of Education South Asia, British Council

We really wanted to look at research networks in South Asia, because networks are an extremely important part of building intellectual capacity. The research shows us many things, but it is clear that there are two major challenges to research in the region. There are geopolitical tensions across the region – we have found very little in the way of cross-regional collaboration currently within South Asia. Instead there tends to be more collaboration with partners in the UK and elsewhere. Security issues are another problem, particularly for Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran.

Even so, India is proving particularly strong in terms of its international research partners with US, Germany and the UK. Collaboration has improved the quality of research, with a lot of India researchers are being published in international journals. Our research also suggests that there's been a big increase in the rate growth of knowledge through collaboration across as well as within disciplines. Funding remains a major issue: in science and technology the expectation is that they'll be less reliance on public funding, but in social sciences and the arts public funding is vital to support these networks.

Capacity and capability are very strongly linked. How we support people to develop their own research networks and develop their own capability is a key issue and the British Council in working hard to foster these collaborations. At one of our global conferences last year we managed to convene at very short notice a meeting of all senior ministers and policy advisers that were attending as part of our South Asia delegation. The British Council helped them to agree in principle to a working group to look at how to enhance the visibility of research networks in the region.

Opinion: "Start small. Think broad."

- Professor Richard Black, Pro-Director Research, SOAS, University of London

I've spent at least half my career involved in international research collaboration. I've noticed some interesting things:-

1. Large variations in investment in research. Across South Asia, levels of investment can be as low as 1% of GDP, compared with UK's 1.7% or Germany's 2.9%. If you're not investing in research in the first place there is a limit to the extent to which you can collaborate with others. There is hope here though because things can change however with concerted effort. Back in the 1990s China spent very little on research but is now considerably above the figures for the UK. That China was able to grow its research spend significantly for a number of years shows that big changes are achievable. South Asia is a largely untapped reservoir for collaboration at this stage.

2. Why we collaborate in the first place. We collaborate for a number of reasons. Amongst other things, collaboration: reduces costs; can fill skills gaps; and can transfer technology. In many respects, And of course improving collaboration can be part of improving diplomacy. Even so while liberation can reduce costs it also costs money to collaborate.

3. The importance of understanding the outputs of collaboration. It's important to realise the value of knowledge of itself. I may have lots of knowledge about a subject, but if the only person I talk to about it is myself then it has little value. Knowledge is worth far more when it is shared and the extent of this worth depends on the difference in knowledge between donor and recipient.

So how do we move forward with collaboration?

1. There's no disgrace in "starting small". It's good to experiment with small collaborations, even those that you may initially be reluctant to get involved with. I had one such an experience with one PhD student – I was initially reluctant to get in involved with a project yet our collaboration has impacted generated

a stream of productive papers new modelling techniques – alongside our shared knowledge is the extra value we gain from trust in those with whom we collaborate over a long period of time.

2. It also really important to "think broad" – I'm aware of one collaborative project with roots in archaeology, in which linguists work side-by-side with computer scientists in order to decipher ancient languages on tablets of stone. An exchange of knowledge between a humanities student and his or her peer from the engineering faculty can find previously untapped areas of collaboration with far more value than if two humanities student or two engineers talked to each other. In other words, there is great unrealised potential that could be harnessed by collaborating more across disciplines.

Opinion: "Collaboration is a fantastic way of building trust and understanding"

- Danny Whitehead, Country Director, Iran, British Council

There is considerable value in international research collaboration well beyond the research itself. One of the most valuable aspects is the benefit to cultural relations - collaboration is a fantastic way of building trust and understanding between parties.

While the relationship between the UK and Iran at the political level has been characterised by deep mutual mistrust in the past, cooperation through Higher Education has been a powerful way of challenging misconceptions between the two countries. Collaboration between students and institutions are a powerful way of changing views in society.

Media headlines are often dominated by negotiations over controversial areas such as nuclear non-proliferation, but there are many other areas, for example in natural environmental sciences which already make a difference in the lives of everyday Iranians. International collaboration is also a powerful way to prevent brain drain, something from which Iran has suffered in the past.

21ST CENTURY MODELS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

Public-private partnerships, quality assurance and the march of technology

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Potential

- There are major opportunities for policy makers, employers and academia to build new models and working alliances to meet the challenges of Higher Education in the region.
- Traditional model of Higher Education will need to change fundamentally. There are signs that this is happening - new models are already being introduced in some areas.
- Concerns around quality and accountability within a rapidly evolving Higher Education system have provided a welcome focus for more innovative approaches to assessing quality.

Challenges

- As the traditional suppliers of Higher Education, universities today are operating in a rapidly changing environment. The old system of institutional research and a large, in-house support staff is being shaken up.
- With higher education costs going up, the current learning model, with extensive support staff and hundreds of degree courses, needs to change to avoid becoming irrelevant.
- The "massification" of education supply brings with it numerous challenges for quality assurance. Measuring the quality and reliability of education is only going to get more complicated with rapidly growing - and more diversified - forms of education supply.

Solutions

These include:-

- Higher Education Models - quality will be the major concern, ahead of concern about public-private sector partnerships per se
- New models/partnerships - these will necessitate the "unbundling" of universities as a business model. This will mean a rapid growth in the number of non-institutional providers.
- Embrace an "open" future for universities – as national borders vanish, driven by technological innovation, all universities will have to work harder to demonstrate their distinctiveness and values.
- Adapt to new models of learning – institutions must realise that the consumer is now in charge. Whereas students previously attended a university to learn, now the university has to come to them.
- Develop a wider range of delivery choices - with universities highly flexible in their offer. Universities will need to continue to embrace technology and innovate.

POTENTIAL

Although not the subject of a specific Global Education Dialogue (GED), the challenge of how best to develop new models for learning in Higher Education formed a recurring set of themes throughout the Second Series. This was not a surprise of itself: as we reported in Series 1, a change is coming to Higher Education in South Asia that will transform the future of Universities, redefine the role of the private and public sector in the funding of Higher Education and fundamentally alter the student experience. The debate in the Second Series though moved us on from an awareness of the possibilities for New Models and towards emerging actions across the region.

There were three exciting areas of potential for new and emerging models for Higher Education:-

There looks likely to be a major shortfall of provision when addressing the expectations of the next generation of students. If they can coordinate their actions, there are major opportunities for policy makers, employers and academia to build new models and working alliances to meet the challenges of Higher Education in the region.

To meet the challenges of scale and the demographic dividend and yet remain affordable, the traditional model of Higher Education will need to change fundamentally. There are signs that this is happening - new models are already being introduced in some areas.

With so much change afoot, there are inevitably concerns around quality and accountability within a rapidly evolving Higher Education system. This has provided a welcome focus for more innovative approaches to assessing quality to make sure HE in South Asia is able to expand without compromising standards.

The potential of the recurring theme of “New Models” were among the most interesting to be found across the entire Second Series of Global Education Dialogues (GEDs) in South Asia.

CHALLENGES

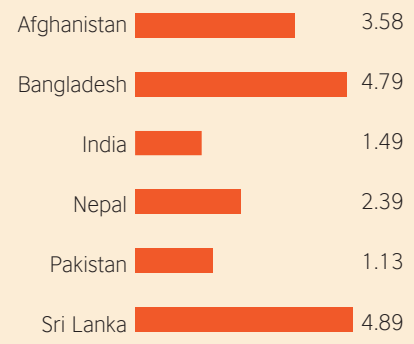
This section is based around a custom research report of the above title commissioned by the British Council and conducted by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU)

As the traditional suppliers of Higher Education, universities today are operating in a rapidly changing environment. As well as coping with fewer resources, traditional learning has evolved: access to information is now freely available online; with smart phones, tablets and an array of digital tools at their fingertips, the habits and expectations of students have changed. A business model that was designed when universities were the guardians of information now looks seriously outdated. With limited public resources, and information and knowledge now freely available online, the old system of broad-based learning, institutional research and a large, in-house support staff is being shaken up. For some, the university business model is no longer viable. Other education providers believe we have entered a brave new world of experimentation, innovation and opportunity in higher education, in which public-private partnerships will play a critical role.

Current demand outstripping supply

South Asia's universities are already feeling the crunch, with insufficient university places. Private universities have been growing trend, but the large influx of such institutions raise concerns over quality assurance mechanisms.

Number of "A" level student per available university space



Source: Country higher education statistics

Higher education has become a massive "open" market, where new players are looking to 'unbundle' universities as a business model, putting pressure on institutions to find new—and sustainable - ways of working and appropriate partners to help them achieve this. The role of massive open online courses (MOOCs), for example, has dominated discussions about new education models in recent years, but other online models are being explored—blended learning, for example, which mixes traditional and non-traditional learning methods.

With higher education costs going up, the current learning model, with extensive support staff and hundreds of degree courses, needs to change to avoid becoming irrelevant. The need for a bricks-and-

Pakistan: Looking for the right private-public blend

Pakistan's universities are also experimenting with new models of blended learning. The government is planning an ambitious Smart Universities scheme to bring free Wi-Fi technology to all 161 public universities in the next four years, beginning with a pilot at its seven main universities. Pakistan's goal is to improve access to education from its current 5% to 15% by 2020, and is looking at involvement from the private sector to support access. At the International Technology University (ITU), Pakistan, a cross-disciplinary teaching and research institution, students work together to solve 'locally relevant' problems using cutting-edge technologies. ITU has based its teaching methods on design-centred learning in an effort to 'ingrain entrepreneurship'.

At the University of Punjab in Pakistan, for example, more than 100,000 students will compete for a degree course in medicine, but only 3,000 students have actually been admitted. Distance learning—especially through MOOCs—has become a useful means to keep costs low and improve access to higher education. Across the region, more than 70 universities now deliver instruction exclusively through online distance learning. Interviewees viewed flexible, low-cost online models such as MOOCs and blended learning alternatives as a good option to 'scale' universities and private higher education institutes (HEIs) suffering from staff shortages.

mortar building has for centuries been a part of our collective understanding of higher education, but now that model is being challenged by new partnerships, online learning spaced and a different breed of student. The new generation of students are completely relaxed about online education – after all, they communicate online, the access entertainment online, they do everything online. But the client base of learners has completely evolved." Demographic changes are also opening up global opportunities for universities and new education providers.

How to maintain quality: Developing HE models with robust frameworks

Globally, there is a shift towards rethinking modes of delivery in universities. Demand for HE is growing and manifesting itself in different forms. This is driven by trends in demographics and greater urbanisation, changing workforce needs, new ways of consuming information, a need for lifelong learning, availability of technology amongst man other factors. All this needs to happen though without endangering quality. How?

The "massification" of education supply brings with it numerous challenges for quality assurance. Measuring the quality and reliability of education is only going to get more complicated with rapidly growing - and more diversified - forms of education supply. For example, in TNE provision alone the ecosystem consists of branch campuses, degree programmes provided by local private higher education institutions, articulation programmes, online distance learning and MOOCS. As new teaching and learning methods emerge, it is stretching the traditional processes - and definitions - of quality assurance in higher education.

Benchmarking quality is likely to get easier with the growth of Big Data and analytics. Institutions will be able to chart a student's progress based on how they interact with technology, and accurately calculate the value of their learning. Knowing what students are learning—and when and how—will be part of the unbundling of traditional university models, ushering in an era where students pay for the outcome, not the enrolment.

There is enormous potential for technology-driven models to scale up in South Asia. In India, smartphone ownership is up 184% - there are more than 200m devices - in 2014. FutureLearn, for example, has 250,000 registered learners on its platform, of which 30% are accessing courses via a mobile device.

India – the growth of small private online courses

South Asia is no stranger to MOOCs—after China, India has the second largest number of people in the world applying to do them. Despite the educational challenges the region faces, there are some increasingly competitive universities now pushing at the door of global university status—the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITS) and Lahore University of Management Sciences in Pakistan among them. Institutions in India are also launching a national MOOC platform called Swayam18, using the open-source edX technology. It will deliver multilingual courses and face-to-face support at centres around the country.

BITS Pilani is one example of how some universities in India have incorporated new learning approaches into their pedagogy to cope with the diverse needs of the student population. The university has four campuses, with 12,000 on-campus students and 20,000 more off-campus students studying engineering, science, management, pharmacy and social science subjects. BITS Pilani offers courses to its students through the MOOC platform Coursera, and along with IIT Bombay University will use edX to deliver three online courses from 2015 onwards, with plans to increase that to 40 to 60 courses in three years' time. The content will be taught to BITS Pilani students via small private online courses (SPOCs), although given student demand for more flexibility, there is uncertainty about whether the MOOCs model may be better for the future.

The Big Debate: Have stakeholders let the students down?

At our Colombo GED, 3 decision makers and students got together to discuss whether students were justified to feel aggrieved at their perceived lack of employability

The Motion: This house believes that Skills shortages, mismatches, and low skills and language levels result from poor communication between policy makers, employers and training providers/academia. While there have been some improvements, the main protagonists continue to fail the regions' youth.

Student Panel (For):

1. Dinesh, India
2. Vimham, Sri Lanka
3. Aqsaa, Pakistan

Dinesh: We are told that up to two-thirds of young people are not employable so there are valid charges to be answered here. In education, professional success hasn't been aligned closely enough with supplying skills to young people. The discourse from policymakers is all about standards, frameworks and national programs. Students are not interested in that discourse - all we want to know is how people got their jobs and whether the training will help them do that. The big question is where were the academics and policy makers 10 years ago?

Vimham: I spent 13 years in primary and secondary school and I didn't realise that I wouldn't have enough skills to be employed at the end of it. What's the point of such an education system that doesn't provide employability? My university is rated highly, but I didn't have the language and communication skills I needed, so I had to join my local debating club to develop these skills.

Aqsaa: Curricula are not set appropriately and this is why there is a skills gap. The nature of learning currently is very memory based. You learn, you put it down on paper and then you get a degree. I believe we should start with soft skills and then pick up knowledge related to the soft skills and that knowledge should be related to practical activity.

Panellists (Against):

1. RCM Reddy, India
2. Nausheen, Pakistan
3. David, British Council, Sri Lanka

R C M Reddy - the motion says this house believes skill shortages result from poor communication between stakeholders. But is poor communication between stakeholders the sole cause for the challenges we face? The answer is no: in my view the lack of a clear indication between stakeholders is probably responsible for about 10%. The other 90% is about the structure of our societies. It's also worth saying that we try to get students to comment on skills policies and we find it very difficult to get their input.

Nausheen - As a representative of the government it's worth saying that no policy-making process will work without getting all the stakeholders involved. Last week we launched a framework that took 3 years, partly because we received 1200 comments from across the country from all the key stakeholders. No policy can be finalised let alone work until consultations are made.

David - Government and businesses are doing a lot to foster education and skills. Clearly there is a lot going on - there are already collaborations going on between the private sector and the public sector. Students should be setting this agenda. People are looking to government and business to lead the way on education but maybe we need to turn the pyramid around. Maybe young people should be dictating to us what we need to be doing. Finally, this debate is about employability but remember learning is supposed to be fun. Thinking all education to just about getting a job is a mistake.

Is poor coordination over English, Skills and Employability the fault of the private sector or the public sector?

Anita Rajan, COO, Tata Strive and VP Tata Sustainability Group, India - Both. The solution lies in the hands of both as well. The government should be an enabler – incentivising areas which are not currently profitable.

Prof Ananda Jayawardena, Vice Chancellor, University of Moratuwa, Sri Lanka - All the stakeholders are looking selfish today. What is missing if you look only within your framework is that we're working in many systems that are interconnected.

Richard Lunt, Consultant, British Council - The solution in my mind lies more with the private sector. One area in the public sector which I think needs strong focus is around the tremendously important role of school teachers

SOLUTIONS

NEW MODELS: KEY ACTIONS FROM THE GLOBAL EDUCATION DIALOGUES

Key actions on Public-Private Partnerships - From the London GED Discussion and Debates

Key actions from discussions:-

- Higher Education Models - quality is the major concern, ahead of concern about public-private sector partnerships per se
- Supervision - efforts need to be redoubled to guarantee quality, as poor perceptions of parts of private sector provision are widespread.
- New providers – both locally & internationally and the biggest challenge will be managing expectations of those who need to deliver and consume learning.

Key actions from research:-

- New models/partnerships - these necessitate the "unbundling" of universities as a business model. This will mean a growth in the number of non-institutional providers.
- Online learning – This doesn't mean that the university model is going away, but a response is required. Students are voting through their enrolment and displaying this interest in a low-cost, episodic education for very specific purposes—much of it focused on vocational training.

Key actions around Technology driven models from the London GED

- Embrace an "open" future for universities – as national borders vanish, driven by technological innovation. All universities will have to work harder to demonstrate their distinctiveness and values. As competition increases for staff, students and funds universities will have to become more focused operations.
- Adapt to new models of learning – particularly the shift in attention from institution to "consumer". The consumer is now in charge: whereas students previously attended a university to learn, now the university has to come to them.
- Streamline/re-examine university core specialities - in face of technology and strong competition. Some universities, for example, need to explore their status as simultaneously global and local institutions, combining on-campus tuition with the kind of online learning methods examined in this report.
- Develop wider range of delivery choices for students - with universities highly flexible in their offer. Universities will need to continue to embrace technology and innovate to develop new revenue.

Key actions from the Colombo GED: "English Skills and Employability – Trinity or Trilemma?"

New models of learning are no longer a vision of the future but an essential part of the present. There is a clear imperative to examine the needs of employers and learner alike - to assimilate needs and wants. Particular attention needs to be paid to:-

- Including alumni in this discussion.
- Ensuring curricula should be co-designed and collaborated by NGOs/Government.
- Getting best practice models from across the South Asia region (i.e. all countries)

Maintaining quality: Developing high-quality HE models with robust frameworks - From the London GED Discussion

Key actions (from discussion)

- MOOCs – a need to meet a major challenge for quality accreditation – low completion rates, unclear outcomes.
- Outcomes – a need to define learning objectives in mobile and online learning.
- Digital divide – essential to maintain close watch as South Asia risks exacerbating social-economic inequalities.

Key actions from research

- MOOCs dominate attention - but blended & other distance learning models must be given due consideration.
- Transnational Education (TNE) – demand is growing rapidly in this area. Just as online learning has grown in the last decade so too has the provision of transnational education (TNE) in Asia countries.

IMPACTS

THE BRITISH COUNCIL AT WORK

Quality Assurance - Support for Kandahar University

Kandahar University is one of the top 6 public universities located in Kandahar, a war-torn province at South West of Afghanistan. Through the Partners in Academic Learning (PAL2) project, the British Council has continuously supported Kandahar University to improve its processes of quality assurance at all its faculties and departments. Even though it's located in a war-torn province Kandahar, only a decade ago with no basic infrastructures, is now one of the top universities in the country and is only one step from a Centre of Excellence for Quality Assurance (CEQA) Award

Abdul Tawas Balakarzai Vice Chancellor for academic Affairs at Kandahar University says: "All of our teaching staff are now well-equipped with self - assessment and individual action plans, Teaching Improvement plan and other management tools developed under the PAL2 project to improve the quality of our provision. The new tools developed have brought significant changes in our university. A recent assessment conducted by the Ministry of Higher Education indicates that our university is on top of the list of all Afghan universities in terms of its quality."

PAL2 aims to support six leading Afghan Universities to develop and embed robust Quality Assurance (QA) processes and to support the six participating Universities to move towards Centre of Excellence status in Quality Assurance (CEQA). This project started in April 2013 for eight Afghan participants from six public universities and Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) pairing them with six UK content specialists. Once these universities are awarded the CEQA status they will be responsible to support all universities at their zones in the area of quality assurance.

Feedback and evidence from MoHE and the universities suggest that this programme helped the development of administrative and academic practices, the enhancement of internationalisation, networking and partnership and the development of QA committees at the selected universities and Ministry of Higher Education. This programme also helped UK participants to further develop their experience of the international HE context in developing countries, understanding the challenge in establishing core HE processes in a post-conflict country and quality assurance frameworks and processes within an international context.

One of the significant achievements of this project is that Ministry of Higher Education made it compulsory for all HE institution to adopt and use the quality assurance framework and other tools and documents developed under this project. This project has recently extended its support to 11 public universities directly and to 61 public and private universities all over Afghanistan indirectly which is a significant step toward development of Higher Education sector in the country.

OPINION

Opinion: "Investment in private-public partnerships requires patience and tenacity"

- RCM Reddy, Managing Director & CEO IL&FS Education & Technology Services Ltd, India

My business is a large integrated financing and operating company. We've got involved with a number of public-private partnerships and we believe that these arrangements are applicable to education. But investment on a large scale requires patience and tenacity from everyone. There is a lot at stake here – 40% of young people in India live below the poverty line. If we get things wrong we will have a time bomb. If we get it right we will have a huge dividend to enjoy.

We have trained large numbers of people and the basic prerequisite is that the training we give has to be aligned to do a job that we know is required. About 60% of training time is about the main training, with much of the rest focused on what we would call life skills. English is an integral part of the training programme.

If you want to address the challenges of the demographic shift towards youth in the region then you have to integrate all skills including English into a framework based around employability.

Opinion: "We need to protect quality, while meeting strong demand"

- Dr Stephen Jackson, Deputy Director, Quality Assurance Agency

We understand the many significant challenges facing higher education. One of the most important is around internationalisation. Over half a million students studying overseas are receiving higher education awards from UK bodies. Higher education authorities therefore have a responsibility that these awards meet the standards of UK education. We need to protect quality while of course meeting strong demand.

There is considerable interest in distance learning and particularly in MOOCs. New methods of delivery have substantial potential, although many institutions are still experimenting with different types of offer as part of this mix. We want to be able to provide assurances that the standards offered through a mix of different types of learning are similar to those offered in higher education elsewhere. That's definitely a challenge.

It's interesting to see that many of those interested in studying via new methods either have a higher education qualification, or are already currently studying for one. They are using new forms of learning as a way to access information and knowledge that will be valuable to them as part of their wider studies. And so some institutions are considering integrating these new forms of learning as part of the traditional study programme.

Opinions: "We're seeing an enormous push towards "mobile first" design"

- Bhanu Potta, Senior Advisor on EdTech Strategy to Worldwide Education Group & Beth Watson, Director of Education, Asia Pacific Region, Microsoft

Bhanu Potter: The future is already here in terms of the transition from "bricks" to "clicks". To us at Microsoft, the evidence is clear, in terms of how fast mobile use is growing, with 250 million subscribers and close to 100+ popular mobile learning services. The category of mobile learning is English language learning.

Those agencies that have realised that mobile learning is not just learning pushed onto a mobile have succeeded. Those who have not realised this have failed. This is why we're seeing an enormous push to "mobile first" design. Three things are happening:-

- Mobile-first design is breaking the barriers of current course construction.
- Course designers are starting to open themselves up to collaborate with other aspects of design, including game design techniques.
- Using mobiles leads to constraints. This is good it forces you to focus on what is most critical into 3 min – it makes you get to the crux of what really matters.

Beth Watson: This debate is not so much about technology as about what the consumer wants. Higher Education is

changing rapidly and we can see from our work with a number of academic institutions. Labour experts predict that the proportion of work roles involving technology skills will grow to about three quarters, but can anybody even think of a job these days that doesn't already involve technology in some way?

Opinion: "To meet the demand, we have to use online – without this, it is impossible"

Prof M A Mannan, Vice Chancellor, Bangladesh Open University, Bangladesh

In my view, the region should be definitely enjoying a demographic dividend, with 16 million entrants every year the market in South Asia. We need to develop both the skills of graduates and upscale the large majority of the current workforce, who are unorganised and unskilled. But how are we going to train all these people?

In Bangladesh, we are trying to develop technology-based models. The Open University here has web-based television and radio, students can watch or listen but they must have internet connectivity. We are using new platforms and learning management systems, through which we can do with everything from admissions to the publication of results and even issuing provisional certificates online. There are a huge number of people who will be receiving training from trainers. To meet the demand we have to use online – without this, it's impossible.

There are many problems, but also many opportunities. Lectures for example can be attended in regional centres across the country where people are allowed to ask questions of instructors, just like face-to-face learning. We must make the best use of every resource available – we are great users of YouTube because we definitely improve the quality of learning by watching things second that time.

What we're effectively doing is using technology to go where the learners are rather than have the learners come to the places of learning. We must all have an institutional and mental readiness to use technology. We are trying to progress - and have progressed a lot – but teachers and students need to develop their IT literacy to move further and faster.

Opinion: "It's easy to feel seduced by the opportunity to learn so much"

Dinesh Kapur, Jubilee Scholar, University of Cambridge (UK), India

When you have access to digital technology and online courses it's easy to feel seduced by the opportunity to learn so much. But in my experience there are some pitfalls. I realised that I had to be extremely self-motivated to learn this way. I was, but there are many people who may not be as motivated. Additionally, the whole use of this type of learning is predicated on reliable infrastructure and levels of instruction. Thinking back, I realised that my best experience came when I was in a University with which was flush with funds and bandwidth for downloading content. When I came back to India, such an approach became more challenging, which could be because the physical infrastructure wasn't there.

CALL TO ACTION

The past two years of Global Education Dialogues (GED) have built a comprehensive picture of the tertiary education landscape in South Asia. Our report on the First Series, entitled 'Revolution and Realities in the New Economic Order' clearly outlined the calls to action for South Asia and the UK's HE and skills sectors to address. This report of the Second Series has detailed some of the "Potential", the "Challenges" and, crucially, the "Solutions" for a period of tumultuous change for Higher Education in the region.

On the subject of skills, there is a huge opportunity to change mindsets to meet the daunting challenges faced. It is imperative that this happens, with 16 million young people entering the workforce every year. Within the context of the skills debate, learning English is a skill in huge demand, albeit with a caveat that the language needs to be carefully integrated into high-quality education to radically improve the employability of millions across the region.

The potential of women to transform HE leadership is a revolution that may at last be becoming a reality. There is so much scope for gain - only 3% of vice-chancellors in the region are women and rapid progress on the number of female researchers, professors and VCs is a prerequisite to meeting the rapidly growing demands of the student population.

To end the dearth of female researchers is a clear policy imperative for other reasons too. South Asia's research capacity has been increasing but international collaborations have the potential to match the intensity seen in other regions. Building networks will be an extremely important part of building intellectual capacity and even altering the economic paradigm of South Asia towards creativity, innovation and profitability.

Finally, there are major opportunities for policy makers, employers and academia to build new models and working alliances to meet the challenges of Higher Education in the region. This can and must continue – new models are already being introduced in many places but the process needs to accelerate without compromising the quality of provision.

The Call for Action of this report is clear. We now know the Potential, we know the Challenges and we are beginning to see the Solutions emerge across a New Horizon for Higher Education in South Asia. Now it is time for to move from awareness to action and deliver the change that the region deserves to enjoy.

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We are grateful to all the people who took part in the dialogues and generously gave their thoughts and opinions. It should be noted that their views reported here are not necessarily the views of the British Council.

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