

SOUTH ASIA AND HIGHER EDUCATION



Revolution and realities in the new
economic order

Findings from the
Global Education Dialogues South Asia Series

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INTRODUCTION

South Asia and Higher Education - Revolution and realities in the new economic order.

A Change is coming to Higher Education in South Asia that will transform the future of Universities, redefine the role of the public and private sector in the funding of Higher Education and fundamentally alter the student experience. The drivers of this change stem from the demographics affecting South Asia that see both a bulging youth population with an expanding population ensuring that South Asia will house 25% of the world population and will be larger than China. Some of the data is simply overwhelming: 1 million new entrants to the work force each month every month for the next twelve years, the demand to create 500 million vocational training places, the proposed building of 200 new Universities and the need for over 50,000 new Faculty members. Yet there are also contra influences such as the high rate of graduate unemployment, the lack of liberalisation of the educational market place and the failure of governments to harness both the private sector and build a new narrative of reform. Simply put, the change coming to South Asia cannot be embraced by expanding an existing system, it demands a new approach to the academic model, to quality and to funding. Failure to find new solutions and to meet the demographic demand for high quality accessible education will see the region locked into a spiral of low value skills and even higher graduate unemployment.

There are seven core challenges that could lead to the transformation that all governments seek. These are:

Dangerous Demographics -with a rapidly expanding population allied to a youth bulge there is clear demand for increased participation in Higher and Vocational Education. To avoid remaining in a low skills low wage spiral many young people expect to see both widening participation away from its current 12% to a much broader base. An IT literate and socially savvy youth population demand that access routes not only provide progression in Higher Education but that HE

itself meets quality standards. This raises fundamental questions about the quality and scale of provision, the need to re-skill Faculty members but also the need to build deeper research networks. The next generation pushing for access to Higher Education or high quality skills provision see employability as crucial, demand innovative approaches and no longer accept traditional approaches to study. Across South Asia the next generation is pushing the boundaries of provision. This can drive a liberalisation of provision.

South Asia and the New Economic Order - South Asia has the advantage of its demographic dividend to be harnessed. Whilst East Asia is ageing, it is the USA and South Asia that is reaping the demographic windfall. This provides the lift point for South Asia to assume a new place in the global economic order. Expansion of Higher Education provision, skills development and investment in research would bring immediate economic benefits leading to greater innovation and a move away from low skills low value occupations to high skills high value outcomes. This does demand a flexible and innovative response from administrations that are known for their tendency to over-engineer systems and protect interest groups.

Public-Private Sector partnerships - the reality is that state systems cannot meet the funding demands, nor the supply of quality Faculty and it requires a new partnership between the public and private sector. To date state systems have guarded their ownership of Higher Education and the private sector have criticised from the sidelines. Despite some excellent examples, there remains a major gap in public-private partnerships to meet the demands of the next generation and the scale of provision. It will require a new working alliance between both sectors to meet the challenges of provision for Higher Education and Skills provision.

Quality and Accountability - a consistent theme emerging across South Asia is the importance of quality and accountability. This demands a robust structure for quality assessment of skills provision and Higher Education. This should and could lead to enhanced

research network, greater inclusion, the removal of weak teacher and the reduction of low quality provision in the skills sector. This is a challenge for both the public and private sector and it requires challenging aspects of the status quo but without this the opportunities for investment, sustainability and scalability of provision cannot be met.

Innovation and Delivery - “the traditional model of Higher Education is dead, it just hasn’t realised it yet” (commentator at the GED Sri Lanka). To meet the challenge of scale, to meet the opportunities of the demographic dividend and to be affordable, the traditional model of Higher Education has to change fundamentally. This means moving beyond conversations about MOOCs or on line learning but considering a consumer based model of Higher Education and skills development that allows multiple progression routes. There is a demand for undergraduate courses to be completed in two years by teaching for 10 months a year, for modular structures, for distributed universities and for fusing skills and academic study. The demand for soft skills is loud from everyone - apart from Higher Education Faculty members - to increase employability. What is clear that is that new models of delivery, or provision will be required to meet the demands and the current business model for Higher Education is broken and governments will not be able to afford the challenge of scale.

Finding the Faculty - a consistent theme emerging from the research is both the shortage of Faculty members and the concern on quality of teachers. There is vicious spiral of shortage of supply allowing for lower quality of faculty members to be recruited. This is a lose-lose situation. Where are the new Faculty members to come from, where are the skills trainers to come from? This is key role for both government and the private sector in setting standard, supporting quality standards and investing in a new generation of high quality faculty.

Higher Education needs women - The economic force of urbanisation will mean women’s labour market participation will rise and perception of women in the workplace will change. Recent years have seen a surge in demand in the region for higher education by women. Yet, equal access to education in some countries is still somewhat in the distance and the share of women in positions of authority and responsibility in higher education is shockingly low. Policies need to be more focused and consistently applied to harness this talent pool and provide a new generation of leaders for education and the wider economy.

These key themes have emerged from the four research reports we have commissioned, from the 12 think pieces by academics and from the 600 people who attended the 5 Global Education Dialogues and there is broad consensus that there is a need for a call to action so that South Asia can reap the benefit of the demographic dividend.

TRANSFORMING HIGHER EDUCATION IN SOUTH ASIA

Prespectives from South Asia and the UK
on new models of delivery in public, private
and TNE (transnational Education) provision

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Potential

* South Asia accounts for around 25% of the world's population. It is also one of the most youthful, with 37% under the age of eighteen in 2011. Rising demand for higher education, however, is not being met in spite of its growing economic importance. There is an urgent and immediate challenge to transform higher education in the region to make the most of this demographic dividend.

* Higher education's role in facilitating a skilled, knowledgeable workforce has become critical to the competitive advantage of those countries seeking investment in the region. A South Asian revolution in higher education has the potential to be more significant than the transformation of China over the past decade.

Challenges

* The involvement of the private sector has the potential to drive capacity, boost financing and improve quality, though more robust regulation is required. There is general recognition of the need to consider new financing models that require higher education institutes to at least partially finance their own activities.

* The relatively low current quality of higher education has affected the employability of university graduates. There is a disconnect between the needs of the employment market on one hand and courses offered and teaching methods on the other. Nevertheless, there is a promising generation of young leaders emerging via both domestic scholarships and returnees from study abroad.

* The demand for education within South Asia from foreign providers is very strong. While this is a potentially exciting market, bureaucratic hurdles have hampered progress to date. Progress in liberalisation of this market has been made, although not all stakeholders on both sides are enthused by the opportunity.

* Female student participation and university leadership are both lacking. South Asian women continue to be under-represented, with 74 females enrolled in tertiary education for every 100 males, though the gap is

narrowing. There are a handful of female leaders in higher education, but women in general remain highly underrepresented in senior management positions.

* Weak governance and low salaries remain an issue. There are examples of politicisation of higher education across South Asia, raising questions of the extent to which this is hindering development. Pay is also relatively low in public sector universities across the region and careers in academia are not generally sought after.

Solutions

* Capacity needs to be accelerated to meet further demand. Significant financial constraints will drive governments to explore alternative and appropriate ways to bring private sector participation to the higher education sector. As capacity grows, governments will need to ensure equity of access through well designed legislation, targeting under-privileged groups, rural populations and women.

* The cultivation of a cohort of credible private-sector universities renowned for excellence, with targeted funding and scholarships to facilitate access has proven a successful strategy elsewhere in Asia and in South Asia this will need to take place in tandem with efforts to improve regulation and quality assurance in the private sector.

* The employability of graduates is a difficult challenge, but driving the region's research culture and working more closely with industry to develop relevant skills and curricula. Again, other countries in Asia have had success in co-opting industry as stakeholder in the learning process and South Asia can look to these examples.

* Remote solutions incorporating online learning as a means of overcoming issues of physical access could be a solution that works well in some South Asian countries—particularly in light of high mobile penetration rates across the region.

* Independent bodies for oversight and regulation may help to address issues of governance. The key to this will be creating bodies whose responsibilities and motives are distinct from those allocating resources.

POTENTIAL

Introduction

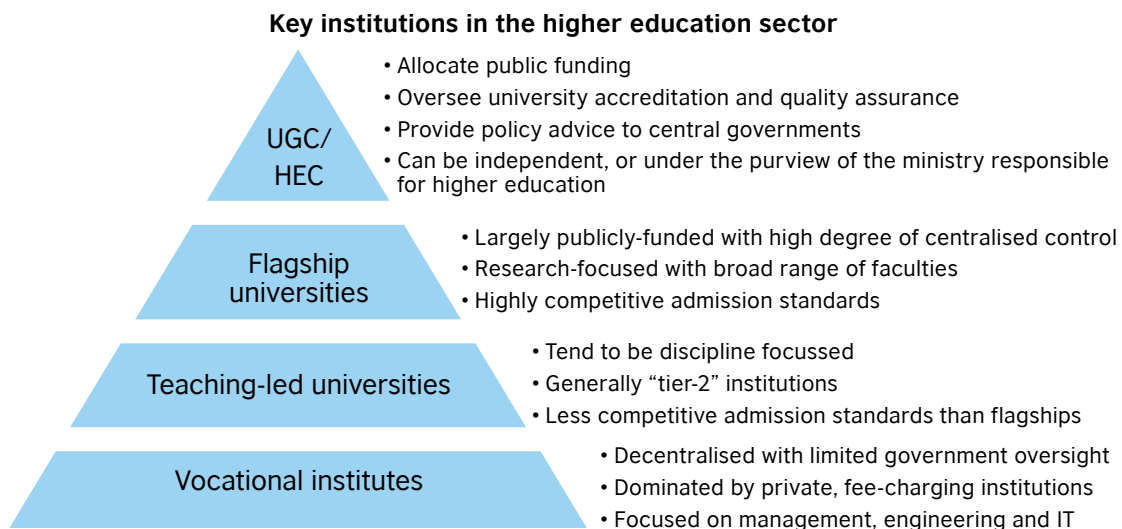
Home to over 1.6bn people in 2011, South Asia is among the most heavily-populated regions in the world, with Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka together accounting for around 25% of the world's population. With 614m people – approximately 37% of the population – under the age of 18 in 2011, the region is also one of most youthful, presenting a distinct window of opportunity for the higher education sector.

Tertiary school-aged population, 2010 (million)



Rising demand in South Asia for higher education is currently not being met, despite its growing importance on the economic development agenda. As South Asian countries forge a path towards growth of their industry and services sectors, the role of the higher education sector in facilitating a skilled, knowledgeable workforce has become critical—to the point of competitive advantage for many countries seeking investment.

CHALLENGES



Source: Economist Intelligence Unit research.

Private sector can meet anticipated demand, but problems remain

The emergence of private universities is a relatively recent development in South Asia. Rocketing demand for higher education places has facilitated the growth of private provision as a strategy to absorb pressure on public sector places, and shift the costs of tuition away from the state, onto students and their families. Private universities have grown to take an important role in the higher education systems notably in India, Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan.

Of the six countries studied, only Nepal and Sri Lanka have yet to fully embrace privatisation in higher education. Sri Lanka has plans to become a higher education hub in South Asia, and according to one government adviser, this will require the government taking further steps to encourage private investment in the sector. However, there is a lot of resistance and dissatisfaction from various parties. In India, private growth has been uneven – it is restricted to a few fields of study and confined to some regions – and quality is questionable.

The involvement of private sector players has the potential to drive capacity, boost financing and improve quality of higher education provision in South Asia,

though more robust regulation is required. Even in countries where private sector activity has been minimal there is growing recognition of the need to consider new financing models that require higher education institutes to at least partially finance their own activities, drawing on non-public sector sources of funding.

There are concerns about the quality of private provision and complaints of many private providers indulging in unfair practices.

Government official, India

There is a realisation in the government that private sector must play an important role in higher education as government on its own cannot bear the huge expense that is needed. Despite all the difficulties and hindrances, some of the private universities have really done very well and I believe that future quality of higher education in Bangladesh will be dominantly governed by the private universities.

Administrator, Bangladesh

Poor graduate unemployment is a worrying trend

(See also Chapter on “Higher Education & Employability”)

An unfortunate by-product of the low quality of higher education, both for the economies of the region and the students themselves, is the low employability of graduates who emerge from the universities. In 2nd and 3rd tier universities, there has been criticism of teaching methodology where students are not trained to conduct independent research. This affects their analytical skills, critical reasoning and drives a further disconnect between market needs and graduate skills. The preponderance of students enrolled in humanities, management and commerce courses and the under-representation of students in scientific and technical fields has further fuelled the market distortion. In Nepal, the trend of graduate unemployment and underemployment has urged the government provide collateral-free loans to spur entrepreneurship amongst unemployed educated youths.

The disconnect between the needs of the market and the courses offered by higher education institutions has contributed to high levels of graduate unemployment and underemployment. There may be some traction in co-opting industry as a stakeholder in the learning process. An example from within the region is of IT services giant Infosys, who has undertaken to work directly with lower ranked universities, training professors from India’s second-and third-tier universities on the company’s own corporate campus in a bid to boost the employability of new graduates in the labour pool.

There is a new generation of returnees and home grown talent to bolster the ranks of leadership. A generation of young leaders with ‘fresh PhDs’ – acquired through national scholarship programmes, and students who have returned with degrees from abroad and exposure to higher education in countries where the sector is more developed is emerging.

The result is that parents expend an awful lot of time and energy in trying to get their children into these public institutions, and the perception is that the non-state sector is not as good. Another option, for those that can afford it, is to send children overseas for higher education in European countries and the United States.

University Administrator, Sri Lanka

In general, a major challenge for the state sector is to ensure graduates are employable, and to embrace an “outcome based” approach to higher education. Art degrees can be a problem in this regard – often leading to a lack of employment.

University Administrator, Sri Lanka

Potential for foreign providers, though bureaucratic hurdles remain

As the number of South Asian students heading offshore for education indicates, the demand for education from foreign providers is very strong, and South Asia continues to represent an exciting “frontier market” for a plethora of international institutions. While there is potential for foreign providers to play a role, bureaucratic hurdles have hampered progress to date. From an inbound perspective, in light of the successful partnerships and models deployed in other parts of the continent, the enthusiasm of foreign providers has been tempered by long delays in gaining approval to operate—if at all. Recent years have seen progress towards liberalisation of regulations governing foreign institutions in South Asia, though stakeholders from both sides are exercising some restraint in driving forward the opportunity.

Female student participation and women in university leadership both lacking

(See also Chapter “Dangerous Demographics: Women, Leadership and the Looming Crisis in Higher Education”)

Despite some progress in recent years, South Asia women continue to be significantly under-represented in Higher Education. UNESCO reports there are just 74 females enrolled in tertiary education for every 100 males in the region. Differing curriculums in girls versus boys schools prevent females from accessing certain courses of study, and the availability of nearby institutions has a greater impact on females than on males: travelling long distances can be a security concern for women.

In spite of these barriers, there has been a considerable narrowing of the gap between male and female enrolment for instance. In Sri Lanka, the number of females attending certain universities has in fact surpassed the number of males. In some of India’s most elite higher education institutions, women outnumber men. As a general rule, women have a stronger presence in the humanities and arts, social sciences, health, and education.

There are a handful of female leaders in higher education in South Asia, but women in general remain highly underrepresented in senior management positions. Female representation in leadership remains low by any benchmark. For some countries, this is due to cultural barriers, and for others, a natural outgrowth of the continued male overrepresentation in faculty departments in universities. There is enormous scope

I I have not seen a bias against women to come in academic leadership positions. But at the same time, there are no proactive government policies or incentives to provide specific opportunities to women.

HE Government official, India

for intervention in this area at the policy level. There are opportunities too to better incentivise women, and also to invest in more targeted human capital development to foster the next generation of female leadership.

Weak governance and low salaries remain an issue

Retaining talent is an issue for many knowledge sectors, but the problem is more acute in higher education in South Asia when linked to issues of weak governance. There are examples of politicisation of the sector across every country studied, raising questions of the extent to which this is hindering the development of higher education in the region in terms of quality, and the development of an independent, meritocratic culture of learning and research.

In most of the six countries in the British Council South Asia region, political affiliations trumps experience in gaining university posts. There are examples of politicisation of the sector across every country

I As political considerations, instead of academic standing, govern the recruitment and promotion of staff, there is severe sense of demotivation amongst the faculty members. Many of them consider political affiliation to be a much easier option to get to higher positions rather than doing serious research

University administrator, Bangladesh

I Part of the problem in terms of quality is that pay scales for faculty members are very low. People are forced to work on low salaries. In Kabul, for example, professors are forced to moonlight by teaching at private institutions in order to supplement their salaries

University Administrator, Afghanistan

studied, raising questions of the extent to which this is hindering the development of higher education in the region in terms of quality, and the development of an independent, meritocratic culture of learning and research.

Dr. Sharif Fayez, former minister of higher education (2002-04) and founding president of the American University in Afghanistan, refers to a “mentality” in his country, a sentiment echoed by Mohan Das Manandhar of the Niti Foundation, who observes a phenomenon of professors also acting as paid advisors to the various political parties in Nepal. Pawan Agarwal, higher education adviser in part attributes politicisation in India to “complexity in the appointment of leaders.” “This is a nationwide problem,” he says. “It depends on the state government in question, and the political relations between the state and central government.” The reality is that higher education is just one area of priority in South Asian markets, competing with a very crowded policy agenda on a number of other hot button issues. In addition, given the nature of education as a “public good”, it comes as no surprise to see that attempts to reform or liberalise the sector are met with resistance in some quarters.

Another challenge for faculty members is in the salary levels. Though the situation varies across the countries studied, pay is relatively low in public-sector universities across the sample. In India, while pay is fairly high compared to regional standards, careers in academia are not sought after in the way that engineering, management, financial services and other “knowledge sector” have been. To address issues on inadequate staffing, some governments and institutions are exploring ideas around performance-linked incentives, and a proper appraisal system. Remuneration is often not performance-based, which leads to lower quality teaching.

SOLUTIONS

Higher education in South Asia is at a crossroads. Implementation of higher education policy suffers from bureaucratic inertia and competing interests. Driven by a confluence of demographic, political and economic factors, governments across the region are recognising the need for higher education as a matter of national competitiveness. In the case of Pakistan and Sri Lanka, aspirations for their higher education sectors to become regional knowledge hubs brings this discussion even closer to the heart of economic development policy. “The biggest challenge for the future is that we have created a ‘bubble’ (in terms of those who have entered higher education) and now society is asking— what does higher education do for us?” says Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed, chief executive officer of the HEC in Pakistan. “There is the expectation that investment in higher education must now lead to a positive societal impact.” Much of the work now lies with higher education stakeholders in articulating the economic argument for more funding to flow into the sector, and for greater urgency on institutional reform.

Capacity needs to be accelerated further to meet anticipated demand

While major progress has been made in expanding the capacity of higher education, South Asia’s participation rates remain low by global standards. This is a worry for governments—if the region is to reap the benefits of its imminent demographic dividend, then capacity will need to further accelerate in order to satisfy the market demand for educated workers. One official estimates that India alone will need a thousand new universities by 2020 if it is to meet its current development goals. In the face of significant financial constraints, governments will be encouraged to explore alternative models of financing, including appropriate mechanisms for enabling and managing private-sector participation in the higher education sector. With the exception of Nepal and Sri Lanka, governments have already begun to draw upon financial capital and technical capacity from the private sector to address challenges pertaining to capacity and quality.

As capacity grows, it will also be incumbent upon governments to ensure some measures of equity in access. To some extent, this can be addressed through well-designed legislation, targeting under-privileged groups, rural populations and women. But the success of implementation is too often a function of resources. In environments where resources are constrained, low impact means of delivering higher education may be worth considering. Remote solutions incorporating online learning as a means of overcoming issues of physical access could be a solution that works well in some South Asian countries—particularly in light of high mobile penetration rates across the region.

Greater emphasis on quality in both the public and private sector required for South Asia to play globally

The cultivation of a cohort of credible private-sector universities renowned for excellence, with targeted funding and scholarships to facilitate access has proven to be a successful strategy in countries such as Malaysia and Singapore, where prestigious private universities compete and in some cases surpass the top state universities. This needs to take place in tandem with efforts to improve regulation and quality assurance in the private sector. The regulatory and enabling environment for private sector services has to be established with careful consideration of standards that prevail in the public sector and that can be well maintained, notes a higher education adviser in Sri Lanka. “The challenge will be to oversee and ensure that the courses that are provided are quality assured and accredited and that the students get what they pay for and what they expect.”

Ensuring better outcomes from South Asian universities

Employability of graduates—and matching of skills to the needs of the labour market—is a difficult challenge in many countries. Driving the region’s research culture and working more closely with industry to develop

relevant skills and design curricula that are more relevant to industry may have some traction.

Again, other countries in Asia have had success in co-opting industry as a stakeholder in the learning process. Examples include the case of Intel, a semiconductor maker, who have research collaborations on mobile with a number of major Chinese universities; and Carl Zeiss, a company in the optical and opto-electronic industry who have opened a microscopy lab at the National University of Singapore furnished with their own equipment in order further research in areas such as materials and bioscience. From within the region IT services giant Infosys has undertaken to work directly with lower ranked universities, training professors from India's second-and third-tier universities on the company's own corporate campus in a bid to boost the employability of new graduates in the labour pool.

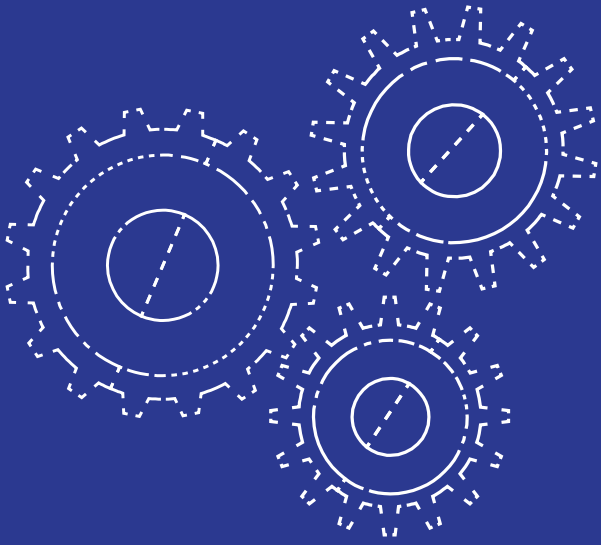
Innovative mechanisms for driving access should be considered in resource- constrained environments.

As capacity grows, it will also be incumbent upon governments to ensure some measures of equity in access. To some extent, this can be addressed through well-designed legislation, targeting under- privileged groups, rural populations and women. But the success of implementation is too often a function of resources. In environments where resources are constrained, low impact means of delivering higher education may be worth considering. Remote solutions incorporating online learning as a means of overcoming issues of physical access could be a solution that works well in some South Asian countries— particularly in light of high mobile penetration rates across the region. Here again, the higher education sector could draw lessons from industry to overcome barriers to access and in streamlining costs. In setting up large mines in remote locations, mining companies have deployed 'pop-up classrooms' to train and upgrade the skills of workers living onsite.

Independent bodies for oversight and regulation may help to address issues of governance

In meeting the quality-improvement challenge, stakeholders are faced with a tension between the need for accountability and oversight, and the desire for institutions and academics to retain their autonomy. Key to addressing this dichotomy will be the establishment of independent regulatory bodies (or mechanisms to this end where capacity and resources are limited) whose responsibilities and motives are distinct from those allocating resources. South Asian governments have made some headway here, but issues of government effectiveness have delayed progress.

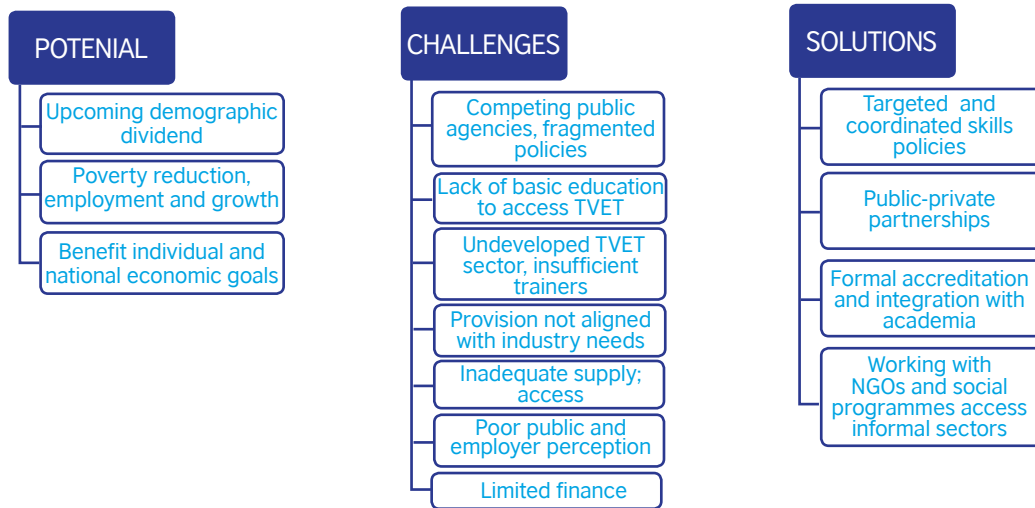
In spite of policy efforts to make higher education more of a priority, making adequate resources available to the sector remains a major challenge, with numerous competing demands and constraints on public-sector budgets. Much of the work now lies with higher education stakeholders in articulating the economic argument for more funding to flow into the sector, and for greater urgency on institutional reform.



THE QUEST FOR EXCELLENCE

The Skills Revolution in the UK and
South Asia

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Source: Conference Presentation at British Council's "The Quest for Excellence – The Skills Revolution in South Asia"

Potential

* Skills development is one of the defining issues for South Asia. It has the capacity either to improve the lives of millions of people and to transform economies or become a huge wasted opportunity for the region's youthful population. This could be a demographic dividend contributing to economic growth and prosperity, poverty reduction and employment generation.

Challenges

* Provision of skills is not aligned with industry needs. In South Asia, this is a critical factor for competitiveness and growth, bringing with it a talent war for knowledge workers. While unprecedented numbers of young graduates are entering the labour market, many are unable to find jobs.

* Economic and political instability is driving young workers abroad. Even so, for many countries in South Asia, migrant labour is an important pillar given economic gains derived from remittances sent back home and the potential for returnees to contribute to skills development once back home.

* Millions in South Asia lack basic literacy and numeracy skills. The challenge of providing second chance

education is far greater than recognised; low levels of basic education are the main reason young people are in poorly paid employment and caught in a poverty trap.

* The technical and vocational education and training (TVET) sector is relatively underdeveloped – both in its size and the underlying institutional framework. There is also a poor public perception of TVETs, with low participation and its reputation as a "backup" option for those who fall out of the academic system.

* Skills development in South Asia has rarely been addressed as a crosscutting issue, giving rise to a fragmentation of the skills agenda and fostering conflict over "turf" across ministries, giving rise to problems in matching skills development with national economic objectives. There is a large diversity of economic progress within the region, but also much that its constituent countries can learn from each other as regional hubs, as well as through closer academic and research collaboration.

* Private sector funding for skills development has been limited due to perceived risks and poor visibility on returns. The complexity of the challenge suggests that such efforts must be guided by data and evidence to yield more private sector involvement.

Solutions

- * Skills solutions require the development of a well-coordinated system. While there has been substantial improvement in access to education for South Asia's young population, the challenge now is to bridge the gap both between the worlds of education and work and between those of tertiary and compulsory education.
- * Matching skills policy with national economic objectives will be crucial. The experience of India and Bangladesh is encouraging, with the establishment of umbrella skills development bodies charged with coordinating and implementing the skills agenda. The development of skills sector councils may also improve perceptions by linking skills training with tangible job prospects.
- * The private sector has a major role to play. Most interesting for South Asia is the development of PPPs for delivery of skills training. Skills financing is another area ripe for innovation. Targeted funds have been effective in pooling government and donor financing towards specific skills objectives.
- * Given that TVET infrastructure is relatively nascent, there is a unique opportunity to experiment with methods of expanding access to capitalise upon existing programmes. The pervasiveness of mobile and internet networks in South Asia is conducive to the deployment of skills programmes via e-learning and MOOC. New technology will be crucial in addressing physical access issues and the challenge of meeting rapidly growing demand.
- * The services orientation of South Asian economies suggests more attention to "horizontal skilling" could be a boon to productivity, with the value of "soft skills" such as English language and communications enhancing the competitiveness of workers in key sectors such as business process outsourcing and hospitality.

POTENTIAL

Skills development has the capacity to improve the lives of millions of people and to transform economies. Yet the other possible result is widespread youth unemployment. In this context, the importance of skills development as a driver of socioeconomic development is paramount. One of the biggest challenges for South Asian countries in coming years is to unlock the latent potential of the millions of young people entering the workforce.

73 million young people globally were estimated to be unemployed in 2013 (ILO). Youth unemployment is most marked in OECD countries with unemployment at 25%, of which 10% are NEETs (those “Not in Education, Employment or Training”) and rising. In the developing economies in South Asia there is a different profile. Youth unemployment rates are lower but more young people are caught in a low skills, low pay poverty trap of insecure and sometimes hazardous work. Unemployment is not an option, the poor must work. 19.5% of the population in South Asia are aged between 15 to 24 and estimated to increase by 12.1 million by 2015 (ILO).

Skills deficits are putting a whole generation of young people at risk, yet this could be a demographic dividend contributing to economic growth and prosperity, poverty reduction and employment generation.

’ The UK has much to share from its own experience on skills moving from a state led approach to one that balances the public and private sector with an emphasis on employer ownership of programmes. The themes of the Policy Dialogue apply as much to the UK as they do the countries of South Asia”.

Martin Davidson, CEO, British Council

“In 2022, 800m Indians will be of working age ... 200m of those will be graduates, and 100m will not join the workforce, but what skills will these other 500m people have? We have to increase capacity for skills development by 10 to 12 times in the coming years.”

Mr. Dilip Chenoy, MD and CEO, NSDC

CHALLENGES

Skills development is one of the defining issues for South Asia. How to unlock the latent potential of millions of young people entering the workforce is a key challenge for all national governments. Over 4 million students are enrolled in skills programmes in South Asia but demand far exceeds supply. India alone is seeking to provide training for over 500 million young and this will require new modes of delivery and realignment of service provision.

Provision not aligned with industry needs

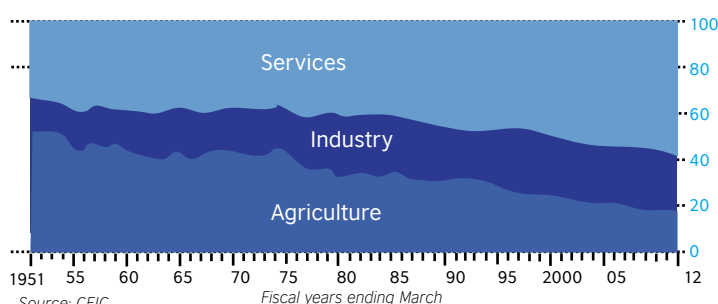
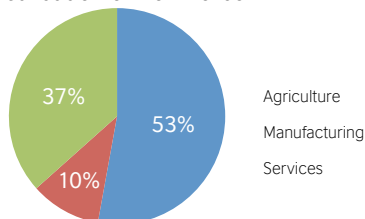
There is a mismatch between skills development and market needs. In increasingly knowledge intensive economies, human capital is a critical factor for competitiveness and growth bringing with it a talent war for knowledge workers. With the growth in knowledge economies has come a boom in higher education with upward pressure from a growing middle class seeking graduate status for their children. Governments in South Asia have allowed rapid expansion in private sector higher education to relieve that pressure. But while unprecedented numbers of aspiring young graduates

Youth Employment and Skills Mismatches in India: A Lost Generation?

Skilling Needs to Align with Shift in Indian Economy

- Most of vocational education focused on Manufacturing industry
- 58% of India's GDP now comes from Services Sector

Distribution of work force



are entering the labour market, many are unable to find jobs commensurate with their knowledge and skills. Young people are questioning the relevance of their education, the lack of political will to tackle jobs and skills, and expressing their frustration on the streets.

“...A geographic mismatch, sector mismatch and skills mismatch may be unnecessarily confining as many as 300m people to low-productivity jobs.”
Manish Sabharwal, co-founder and Chairman of Indian recruitment firm TeamLease Services and a member of the country's National Skills Development Council.

Key Issues

Low employability of educated youth

- Only 15 – 25% of graduates are employable
- Curriculum: Out-dated courses and inadequate
- Lack of practical orientation and apprenticeship

Low social recognition for Vocational Education

- As compared to higher education
- Stigma/ lack of motivation
- Aspirational links to higher education and better jobs unfulfilled

Skills mismatch

- Disconnect between kind of jobs, vocational training and youth's aspirations

Rigidity of existing Higher Education System

- Fixed course duration – minimum 3 years
- Disconnected from industry

Build Bridges between Industry and Academia

Industry - Sector Skills Councils

- National Occupational Standards
- Assessments & Assessor Pool
- Labour Management Information System

Government – Policy

- National Skills Development Corporation
- National Skills Qualification Framework
 - Bridges General Education and Vocational education at all levels
 - Vertical and Horizontal Mobility
- Start 200 Community Colleges

Academia

- Only 15 – 25% of graduates are employable
- Curriculum: Out-dated courses and inadequate
- Lack of practical orientation and apprenticeship

Source: Presentation by Ajay Mohan Goel, Wadhvani Foundation, presented at “The Quest for Excellence – The Skills Revolution in UK and South Asia” in September 2013

Economic and political instability is driving young workers abroad

Migrants play a vital role in the social and economic development of the country they work in, in the supply of both high end skills and low end skills in industries such as health and social care, IT, hospitality and construction. But global competition for talent and skills can collide with restrictive immigration policies such as in the UK.

A major part of the challenge will be to ensure alignment of skills training with national policy directives. For many of the countries in South Asia, migrant labour is an important pillar given the economic gains derived from remittances back home. Training workers in the construction, health care and domestic services sectors to compete in increasingly competitive global markets is now a key component of the skills agenda for countries such as India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Nepal.

Pragmatism demands that this area should receive further attention, given that remittances will remain an important source of income and foreign exchange for these countries in the foreseeable future.

The “brain drain”, whereby the best and brightest go

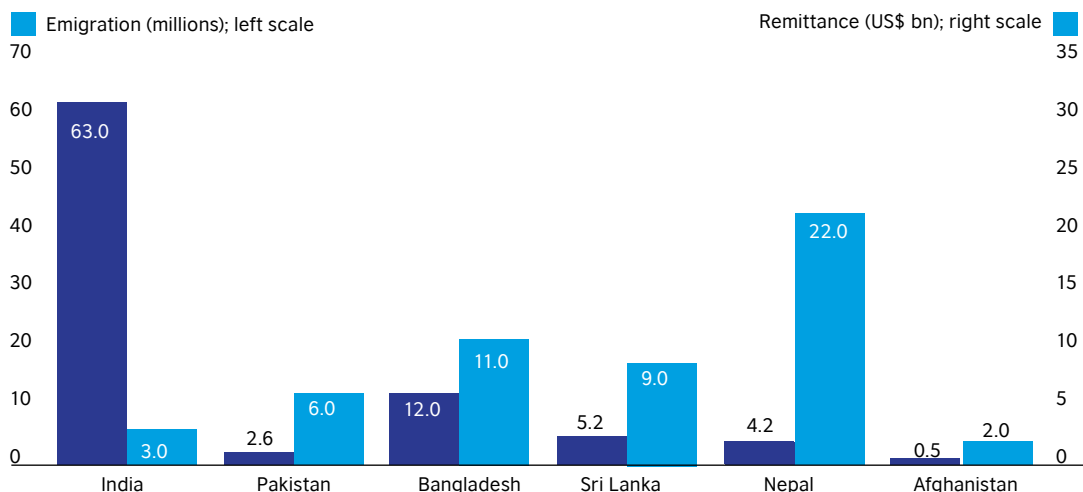
abroad in search of better economic prospects, is often cited as a serious human capital concern for emerging economies. Yet, for many of the countries in South Asia migrant labour is an important pillar of development, given the economic gains derived from remittances. Training workers in the construction, health care and domestic services sectors to compete on increasingly competitive global markets is now a key component of the skills development agenda for countries such as Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Nepal, and worthy of further attention given that remittances will remain an important source of income and foreign exchange for the foreseeable future.

An interesting point is the potential for returnees to contribute to skills development at home. For instance, Sri Lanka has developed incentives to support returnees in setting up new enterprises and reintegrating into the economy. Through this “brain circulation”, there is the potential to make a positive contribution to skills development through investment and the reintegration of valuable human capital into the economy.

Inadequate supply, inequitable access

According to the EFA Global monitoring report 2012,

South Asian emigration and remittances, 2010



Source: World Bank

91 million young people in South and West Asia lack basic literacy and numeracy skills. The challenge of providing second chance education is far greater than recognised; low levels of basic education are the main reason young people are in poorly paid employment and caught in a poverty trap. But it is not just basic education – this is a world where adaptability is crucial for acquiring new knowledge skills and attitudes in a wide range of contexts. Competitiveness and productivity will depend on an adaptable as well as a skilled workforce. Investing in access to lifelong learning will be critical for upskilling, reskilling and the development of transferable skills. New paradigms of learning cities and learning communities are emerging with the learner as consumer picking and choosing where and what skills to learn.

TVETS: Underdeveloped and poorly perceived

Outside the secondary and tertiary education system, the technical and vocational education and training (TVET) sector in South Asia is relatively underdeveloped – both in its size and the underlying institutional framework. There is also a poor public perception of TVETs, with relatively low participation, partly because of its reputation as a “backup” option for those who fall out of the academic system. One of the biggest problems for skills development is the poor “brand equity” of vocational education in the

Number of TVET students enrolled

COUNTRY	STUDENTS	YEAR
NEPAL	10,770	2005
AFGHANISTAN	22,000	2010
SRI LANKA	52,546	2003
PAKISTAN	315,000	2009
BANGLADESH	453,375	2008
INDIA	3,100,000	2013

region. Therefore, initiatives that link skills training with tangible job prospects may improve the reputation and attractiveness of the sector. Poor convertibility of qualifications between vocational and academic streams of education has also been a deterrent to uptake. This lack of optionality prevents potential students from viewing skills training as a “mainstream”

“The institutional and regulatory frameworks for TVET are also severely underdeveloped ... We do not have any mechanism for recognition of non-academic training, nor a proper accreditation body.”

Mohd Asif Stanikzai, NSDP

path to good employment.

However, outcomes of TVET programmes have not been robust – high unemployment persists amongst TVET graduates. To improve matters, standardisation of qualifications and a robust accreditation framework, recognised by both mainstream academic institutions and employers, are needed.

Competing public agencies, fragmented policies

Governments have recognised the importance of education and training in this process. There have been notable successes in improved participation rates for primary and secondary education across the region. But youth unemployment and underemployment remain pervasive, despite a growing cohort of educated young workers joining the workforce. As a result, policymakers are now placing greater emphasis on understanding skill gaps in labour markets and developing skills systems geared to address these.

A key priority is to bring more clarity to skills policy, which is unsurprising given the multidisciplinary nature of the skills agenda. This complexity has resulted in the division of responsibility across various agencies,

with national development strategies addressing skills development only in relation to broader goals. Sequenced reforms and targets have been lacking, and objectives tend to be dispersed among several vertical pillars within government.

Skills development in South Asia has rarely been addressed as a crosscutting issue, giving rise to fragmentation of the skills agenda and fostering conflict over “turf” across ministries, giving rise to problems

in matching skills development with overall national economic objectives.

South Asian governments have realised the importance of TVET to increase labour market participation. The challenge for governments lies in fostering a market for skills training from the ground up, and doing so in a way that calibrates with national policy objectives.

Skills development policies and institutional frameworks

Country	Structure of relevant skills development body	Private/Public Provision of TVET	Key Features of Skills Policy
Afghanistan	National Skills Development Programme (NSDP), under the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs & Disabled.	Both	Draft National Education Strategic Plan (1389-1393) aims to increase enrolment and training of TVET students to 150,000 by 2015.
Bangladesh	National Skills Development Council (NSDC), headed by the Prime Minister.	Both	National Skills Development Policy 2011 aims to establish more flexible and responsive delivery mechanisms that better service the needs of labour markets. It aims to a) improve access to skills for various groups including women and people with disabilities; b) encourage participation in skills development by industry organisations, employers and workers
India	National Skills Development Corporation (NSDC), a company set up by the Ministry of Finance under Section 25 of the Companies Act.	Both	National Skill Policy 2009 has set the target of skilling 500m people by 2022, by increasing the capacity and capability of skill development programmes through the creation of a National Vocational Qualification Framework.
Nepal	Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training (CTEVT), under the Ministry of Education. The National Skill Testing Board sits under the CTEVT.	Both	2012 TVET Policy aims to establish an inclusive and equitable approach towards TVET by extending TVET and employment opportunities to all, and by providing appropriate, contextual and quality TVET in consonance with the demands of the national and international employment market.
Pakistan	National Vocational and Technical Education Commission (NAVTEC), under the Prime Minister's Office; National Vocational & Technical Training Commission (NAVTTTC), under the Prime Minister's Secretariat.	Dominated by the public sector	National Skills Strategy (2009-2013) aims to provide a framework for skills development which achieves two paradigm shifts (a) the shift from time bound, curriculum based training to flexible, competency based training and (b) the shift from supply led training to demand driven skills development by promoting the role of industry in both the design and delivery of TVET.
Sri Lanka	Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission (TVEC), under the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Skills Development; Department of Technical Education & Training, under the Ministry of Skills Development, Vocational and Technical Education.	Both	Mahinda Chintana: Vision for a New Sri Lanka, A Ten Year Horizon Development Framework 2006-2016 Discussion Paper aims to reduce youth (15-24) unemployment from 22% to 9% by 2016, by generating 2.4m gainful employments through private, public and foreign job opportunities within the next 6 years

Source: Economist Intelligence Unit

More generally, skills shortages and mismatches, and low skills levels result from poor communication between labour market needs, employers and training providers. The capacity of an education and training system to respond to labour market needs and changes in occupations will depend on social partnerships between employers, small and large, trade unions, agencies providing labour market intelligence, government ministries responsible for education and training, and advisory bodies such as Sector Skills Councils.

Limited Finance

Private sector funding for skills development has been limited due to perceived risks and poor visibility on returns. Resource constraints have implications for the development of skills system across the region. The potential economic rewards of greater public-sector focus on skills could be immense, though the complexity of the challenge and other competing priorities suggest that such efforts must be targeted, guided by data and evidence, and done in collaboration with the private sector. A leap of faith on both sides will be essential for the development of a relevant, functioning and sustainable skills system in South Asia. Given the extent of South Asia's large informal economies, there is a real need to consider skills for the unorganised sector, and yet this receives limited attention in policy dialogues.

Resource constraints have implications for the development of skills across South Asia. If governments in the region can create and implement coherent strategies to complement their overall economic plans, the potential payoffs are immense. However, the complexity of the challenge and other competing priorities suggest that such efforts must be guided by data and evidence, and in collaboration with the private sector. "The public sector has an execution deficit, while the private sector has a trust deficit," notes Mr. Sabharwal. A leap of faith on both sides will be essential for the development of a relevant, functioning and sustainable skills system in South Asia.

SOLUTIONS

The Future of Skills Training in South Asia

Institutions and policy	Skills Provision	Skills Outcomes	Public perceptions
<p>Development of well-coordinated system</p> <p>Matching skills policy with national economic objectives</p> <p>Government-led, but with industry participation in design and implementation</p>	<p>Private sector participation and investment</p> <p>Modernisation of training systems, better use of ICT</p> <p>More training of trainers, focusing on growth sectors</p> <p>Targeted delivery of services to underrepresented groups / geographies</p>	<p>Monitoring and evaluation of outcomes</p> <p>Inclusion of generic / soft skills</p>	<p>Standardised quality-control and accreditation systems</p> <p>Formally recognised pathways between TVET and higher education</p> <p>Linking of skills agenda to employment outcomes</p>

Institutions and Policy

Development of well-coordinated system

There has been substantial progress in improving access to education for South Asia's young population. The challenge for the region now is to bridge the gap between the worlds of education and work. A viable skills training system is more than just a fallback for those unsuccessful in mainstream education; it can play a long-term role in meeting national economic as well as individual needs, for example by: Preparing people for specific occupational roles linked to industry placements; Up-skilling those already in the workforce, boosting overall productivity and individual success; Re-skilling people who need to find a new career, helping them to avoid under-or unemployment; Offering a second chance to those who have been excluded or fallen out of formal education, by providing basic literacy, numeracy and ICT skills; Supporting local businesses to thrive, thanks to finance and business training as well as mentoring.

Matching skills policy with national economic objectives

A fragmented skills agenda can lead to conflict between ministries over "turf." This inhibits the successful matching of skills development with overall national economic objectives and limits efficiency. The establishment of umbrella skills development bodies, charged with co-ordinating and implementing the skills agenda, represent progress in India and Bangladesh. Notably, these organisations have fallen under the purview of the prime minister in each case, signifying political will at the highest level.

Such institutional arrangements can help in matching skills development with economic objectives, directing attention and resources to benefit key growth sectors as well as those socioeconomic groups most in need. At the same time, ensuring that local government and industry have the opportunity to participate in setting priorities is important, particularly in federated countries such as Pakistan and India where there is a high level of devolution.

Skills Provision

Private sector participation and investment

Critical to the quality and relevance of TVET in particular is the involvement of industry. A common complaint from employers is the mismatch between industry needs and the skills of entrants to the workforce. Yet South Asian companies are reluctant to participate and invest in the skills infrastructure, given the opportunity cost and potential for competitors to benefit.

Matching skills with policy – who’s doing what?

India - developing skills institutions, apprenticeships and training to support the unorganised sector. Sheer scale of challenge necessitates private sector involvement.

Pakistan – trying to develop both basic skills for the unorganised sector and advanced skills for increasing productivity.

Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka – giving migrant workforce skills for greater international competitiveness, to maximise remittances.

Therefore, governments or other neutral players such as social enterprises need to find ways to reduce overheads for individual companies, as well as education on the benefits to industry of their involvement. Some collective action solutions have achieved success, which could be replicated. Industry associations have a role to play in coordinating sector efforts around training and in working with public-sector bodies to ensure that skills curricula are relevant.

Developed through reference to the UK and other Commonwealth countries, but primarily rooted in their own environments and local policy learning, sector skills councils have emerged in India and Bangladesh. Comprising government and industry representatives, these bodies have been charged to work together to define occupational standards for key industries.

The private sector has a major role to play in developing the skills system in South Asia in coming years, and will

need to do much of the heavy lifting for skills delivery and financing. Most interesting for South Asia is the development of PPPs for delivery of skills training, an area where there is potential for the private sector to employ build-own-operate green field PPP models, or to take over facilities and operate these on behalf of the public sector. Skills financing is another area ripe for innovation. Targeted funds have been effective in pooling government and donor financing towards specific skills objectives.

Modernisation of training systems, better use of ICT

Poverty, low rates of urbanisation and insufficient transport infrastructure are just a few of the factors that limit access of South Asia’s rural population to skills training. Given that the TVET infrastructure is at a relatively nascent stage of development in all South Asian countries, there is a unique opportunity to experiment with methods of expanding access that capitalise upon existing infrastructure or community-based programmes.

The pervasiveness of mobile and Internet networks in South Asia is conducive to the deployment of skills programmes via e-learning and MOOC. There is also the potential to “piggyback” on the large social protection networks in the region to deliver skills training to improve livelihoods. Considering the low-income status of all countries in South Asia, providing “second chance” training options for people who have been excluded or fallen out of formal education systems should be an important aspect of the skills agenda. The returns for economic growth will be medium-to long-term, as noted by Dr. Nabi of the International Growth Centre in Pakistan, as the economic vulnerability of the self-employed and informal-sector workers is reduced.

More training of trainers, focusing on growth sectors

Given the challenge of forecasting skills requirements in labour markets, human capital planning for TVET is even more difficult. There is an urgent need to develop

a pool of trainers if South Asia is to deliver on the skills development agenda. Commentators note that the lack of skilled teachers presents a serious bottleneck for skills development. There is a need to focus attention on the training of the trainers for the major industries and occupations in South Asia that are likely to drive demand.

Targeted delivery of services to underrepresented groups/geographies

The use of social protection programmes and NGO networks to deliver skills training to micro-enterprises and vulnerable households has some potential, and can be scaled up quickly. But there is also an opportunity to consider how skills training can improve the value and quality of skills within informal-sector enterprises. Until structural reform of the labour markets takes place, the majority of jobs in the region will remain informal. This necessitates a discussion on ways in which skills training can improve worker livelihoods, and drive micro-enterprise productivity.

Skills Outcomes

Monitoring and Evaluation of Outcomes

The skills landscape in South Asia has suffered from a lack of visibility, with little capacity for collating labour market information. A state-level exercise completed by the National Skills Development Corporation (NSDC) in India covering 22 key sectors is the first of its scale and granularity in the region, enabling a keener understanding of demand for particular occupations and skills. Such data and information is still lacking in the rest of the region, though efforts have been made by USAID and the ILO to develop the intelligence required to support skills planning in Afghanistan and Bangladesh respectively. Funding of research remains a challenge, as does the lack of skills necessary to conduct robust labour market analysis.

Inclusion of generic/soft skills

The services orientation of South Asian economies suggests that more attention to “horizontal skilling” could be a boon to productivity. The export-led models of East Asia required workers to have specific technical skills related to manufacturing, but for South Asia, it is the value of “soft skills” such as English language and communications that will enhance the competitiveness of workers in key sectors such as business-process outsourcing and hospitality.

Public perceptions

Formally recognized pathways between TVET and HE

One of the biggest problems for TVET in South Asia is the sector’s poor quality and low status among potential students. Curricula that are relevant to today’s job market, with direct linkages to employment outcomes, are needed. To this end, the development of sector skills councils—where industry and government collaborate to define occupational standards—may improve perceptions by linking skills training with tangible job prospects. The development of flagship institutions, such as India’s ITIs, could also contribute to increasing the appeal of TVET as a viable learning pathway for students.

Poor convertibility of qualifications between vocational and academic streams of education has also been a deterrent to TVET uptake. This lack of optionality prevents potential students from viewing skills training as a “mainstream” pre-employment option, or returning to skills education at later stages in their careers. Standardisation of qualifications and a robust accreditation framework must be in place for the convertibility of credits to take place. Yet the reality is that with the exception of India, where a National Education Qualification Framework is pending, South Asia is at the very start of this process. Specialised technical skills and a high degree of co-ordination within the public sector will be required to drive this forward.

OPINION

Extracts from a think piece* by Gazi Mahabubul Alam, PhD, *Professor of Education Economics and Planning, University of Malaya

[On the dangers of Government involvement in skills development...]

"...It is anticipated that supply of skilled and mentally & physically fitted manpower either for the business of the state or for the privately owned industries is the responsibility of the state. Therefore development of skills, education and health care is still considered as the businesses of the state. Handling as a business of the state causes more bureaucratic protocols in skills' development. This does not substantially advance skills development. The bureaucratic protocols both at the macro and micro levels are ominously high. As to provide an example, I may note that in Bangladesh, more than 25 ministries are involved within the process of skills' development. Meaning thereby 25 core ministries are involved with the involvement of a large number of micro units. Current atmosphere develops an overlap of skills development programmes without mapping the requirements for actual skills and their pattern. Since an uncountable number of bodies are involved, accountability is a matter of great concern. None of the organisations is willing to take accountability when things go wrong. However, credits on achievement are circulated and sold by each organisation. Unfortunately, in a critical circumstance, none of the concerned macro and micro organisations is happy to shoulder the responsibility. Current climate provides a scope for both demand and supply sides to blame each other without being involved jointly to confront the challenges in skills' development....."

[On the limitations of the export of South Asian labour overseas]

"Some developing countries are also exporting non-skilled manpower which may help them in earning remittances. These remittances may slightly benefit the country's foreign currency reserve in a short term. On the contrary the workers may not necessarily always benefit. The reasons are: (1) Although apparently it

looks rosy, the migrating workers contribute to foreign currency reserve but in order to travel overseas, they have to spend a lot of money which is not transacted through banking channel. This does not provide a scope to calculate the loss and gain of the workers (2) After finishing the contract overseas, while the workers return home, their skills are no longer usable and relevant because of contextual differences of skills and social settings (3) Nations exporting manpower may also import goods at a higher cost that their migrated workers produce in a country of 'transit destination' (4) Human beings are made of flesh and blood and not goods to be exported leading to human trafficking. They are leaving for their dream destinations (with a family back home) and without seeing families for a longer period, they are working in overseas beyond normal working hours under inhuman conditions. Therefore exporting goods produced by the skilled manpower is profitable but exporting manpower is not at all acceptable...."

Martin Doel, CEO of the Association of Colleges, spoke at the British Council's conference "The Quest for Excellence: the skills revolution in the UK and South Asia". Here are his abridged remarks ...

When it comes to skills, I'm not particularly keen on the term "Life Long Learning". It makes you feel like a hamster on the wheel - you never finish, you just keep on going round and round. I much prefer "Through Life Learning". That makes you feel like you're getting somewhere and actually doing something - it feels more productive. My attitude to developing skills, at any stage of one's life, comes down to three considerations:-

Rigour - it's important to be rigorous about the quality of what we produce in skills training, while showing responsiveness to the needs of students. My understanding is that the Sri Lankan system seems to provide qualifications that are respected and we need to develop a similarly rigorous approach to vocational training, because this makes the qualifications clearly worth something. Until we do this, vocational systems will not be held in high regard.

Return – students need to understand the financial case for why they should do a vocational course and getting qualifications. In the informal sector, a cheaper tradesman will always get work unless you have a proper and credible "ecosystem" for qualifications, one that will make a real difference to the confidence of the consumer and the premium on training for the trainee.

Boiling the Ocean – there's an old saying that theoretically you could attempt boil the whole ocean but that in reality it's simply something that will never actually happen. Similarly, we can produce plans and strategies around skills for ever, but that what we need to do is to focus on what's achievable by boiling far smaller pots of water, rather than oceans, to bring about real change. In the UK, for example, big employers are starting individually to train their supply

chains. Lots of large employers choosing to do this can make one very big difference overall. It gives vocational skills to their employees to get the guarantee of quality through their supply chain.

Michelle Salinger from Cisco spoke about the role of technology in delivering lifelong learning at the British Council's conference "The Quest for Excellence: the skills revolution in the UK and South Asia". Here are her abridged remarks ...

Successful lifelong learning is about meeting the skills needs of individuals at every stage of their careers. I think it's time we redefined the basics around what these needs are. We know literacy is crucial as a skill, for example, but should literacy now be defined more broadly to include digital literacy? We need to redefine what core skills mean in the digital age.

We also need to understand that we learn best when we really need to learn something. So I like to talk about "just" training - just enough training, just in time and just for me. Training is about personalising what you need in order to get to the next stage of your career. Access to information is absolutely essential in this regard – I don't just mean access to books or online but access to understand the quality and availability of training and its relevance to the individual.

In Bangalore, we've been using technology to bridge the digital divide - our classrooms allow the best trainers in India to teach rural communities remotely, where there would otherwise be very limited access to education. We do this using 3G connectivity, which we know is much more connected and pervasive than straightforward internet access in rural areas. This is having a huge impact on the way people learn, particularly on how to learn effectively when not in a traditional classroom situation.

The quality of the technology is only as good as having the people teaching using it. But if you have the

right people, a teacher can teach several classrooms at the same time, a great way to meet the rapidly increased demand for teaching in rural areas. We also give people the opportunities to retrain in new skills in schools and colleges in Kenya and other areas of Africa. The opportunity to reskill and retrain is critical to the success of these economies. IT skills in particular are increasingly in need internationally. A focus on technology skills alone is not enough, because softer people and business skills are needed to supplement the technical understanding. While the likes of Microsoft and Cisco are working in partnership with colleges, schools and universities, the big question is how we can get other sectors such as manufacturing and engineering do likewise.

BEST BLOGS

SOUTH ASIA'S MOMENTOUS DEMAND FOR SKILLS

South Asia's momentous demand for skills

South Asia is on the cusp of a demographic dividend even greater than China's in the last century. With a population of 1.6 billion, of which 20% are aged 15-24, a sizeable next generation is emerging, along with inherent challenges. Peter Upton, our director in Pakistan, explains.

South Asia is a region of extremes. An aspiring middle class of more than 400 million contrast against 500 million living below the poverty line. It is home to the world's largest democracy, and also to fragile states. It boasts centres of world-class innovation, but faces major challenges on access to education.

The numbers speak for themselves. There are predicted to be one million new entrants to the labour force every month for the next 20 years. There are more than 750 universities in the region, with a further 1,500 planned. There is an extensive and unorganised informal education sector. More than four million people are taking vocational courses, but the demand is for more than 100 million places.

Urban and rural: a cycle of limited opportunities

Urbanisation is an important trend in the region, but there is still a significant demand for skills in rural areas. The problem is that rural areas are being marginalised through weak school systems, a lack of training, a lack of employment opportunities and low-value work, which leads to a cycle of low-skilled workers leaving to seek employment. In urban areas, there is insufficient training to meet demand, which is exacerbated by the numbers of low-skilled workers who move to the city to find opportunities. In the end, limited opportunities make it hard for people to move up the ladder.

Why bodies such as the British Council are interested in developing this area

There are major challenges affecting youth employment and skills training. Vocational courses are one of the most important progression routes from school to work or higher education. The demographic dividend could turn into a disaster if the region doesn't provide access to relevant training. India is focusing on capacity and quality. Pakistan and Sri Lanka have developed strategies linking skills, employers and government. However, demand is still outstripping supply. The British Council supports these efforts by running strategic programmes such as policy dialogues. It also works with individual governments and agencies to support their national policies, brokers partnerships, and shares best practice from the UK.

What's in this effort for the UK?

By sharing best practice and skills training, the UK can build on its reputation in the region. It can offer expertise to ensure that the skills training is of high quality, build regional and international networks so that knowledge can be easily shared, and develop online skills training. South Asia is a huge opportunity for the UK to strengthen its reputation as an expert and partner in the region.

An image problem: vocational skills associated with low status

The challenge in South Asia is that vocational skills are associated with low status and limited work quality. There is still prestige attached to degrees, even though there is huge graduate unemployment across the region. There needs to be a revolution in the approach to skills, and quality assurance to ensure that the training offer is seen as high in value, quality and impact for young people.

An outward-looking youth

Across South Asia, most policy-makers recognise that economic success and social cohesion can be brought about through greater prosperity, education and equality. To achieve this, governments are providing more opportunities for overseas research, more international programmes, and more ways to work with other countries collaboratively. But the policies still lag behind the changes driving them.

The consequences could be rising youth unemployment, which runs the risk of creating a lost generation, radicalised or alienated. Support from the UK and others in dealing with the skills challenge will be critical to creating more opportunities, stronger cultural identities and confident, outward-looking young people.

The relationship between private and public involvement in the region's skills agenda

Neither government nor the private sector can solve this alone. It requires a leap of faith by both sectors, working together on a scale no-one has attempted yet. It demands a radical approach to delivery, flexible routes for progression and learning, better quality assurance and sustained investment from both public and private sector.

The outcome could be good for all, but at the moment, the private sector is responding to demand in a series of loosely-connected initiatives, and the public sector is following traditional models. The leap of faith is for both sectors to work together in a new partnership that could propel the region to the next stage of economic development and prosperity.

21ST CENTURY UNIVERSITIES

The future of Higher Education in South Asia

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Potential

* South Asia is a young and dynamic region, but serious questions remain about the capacity of the region's universities to equip them with the knowledge, skills and education to meet employers' needs. The number of universities cannot at present meet current or future demand.

* The pace of change in the region is rapid. It demands flexibility and innovation and South Asia must act now to create a higher education sector that harnesses its young people's potential and ensure that the demographic dividend is not wasted.

* Universities in South Asia are a critical tool for creating a lasting social and economic impact, particularly when tackling many entrenched regional issues, such as employability, social mobility and equity of access.

Challenges

* As higher education moves onto the radar as an important component of manpower development, governments across the spectrum are re-examining their strategy with respect to university participation and access. One of the major barriers to surmount in many countries is that of physical access.

* Though there has been substantive growth in university capacity in the past few years, this has in some cases been at the expense of quality. South Asia as a whole remains well below the average on various international university rankings, with none in the Times Higher Education (THE) rankings.

* Universities have work to do to "depoliticise" the sector, while raising standards of provision and quality assurance. Politics and academia remain uneasy bedfellows and this is hampering transparency and quality.

Solutions

* There is a renewed drive to boost capacity and find ways of injecting funding into the higher education sector. India and Pakistan have pushed up funding in recent years but

other countries have shown less inclination to devote significant additional public money to the sector in recent years.

* The lack of access to universities in South Asia by poorer young people has seen policies such as fee caps, multi-tiered pricing structures and the provision of student loans introduced.

* Governments have turned to the private sector to boost higher education capacity, though the pace and extent of growth has varied across countries.

* The involvement of foreign universities is predominantly in the form of collaborations with existing institutions, though not always with the existing public universities.

POTENTIAL

South Asia's huge youth bulge poses an urgent challenge for higher education institutions

South Asia is a young and dynamic region with an emerging demographic dividend. Millions of young people are joining the workforce, but serious questions remain about the capacity of the region's education systems to equip them with the knowledge, skills and education to meet employers' needs. Education is the key for social mobility and economic growth and a large demographic dividend for the region. The question is whether current education provision in South Asia good enough.

The challenge is how to meet the demands and aspirations of young people, governments and employers. Governments are recognising that the current education provision needs to be scaled up. Companies are vociferously stating that current school leavers and graduates do not have the necessary skills for the business world.

The spectre of a large population of unemployed young people poses a threat not only to growing economies, but also to national security. South Asia needs to rethink what is offered, how it is offered and by whom. Schools and higher education institutions must expand now to meet demographic demand.

The region must rethink its education provision to match demand

Many questions remain. More university places and more higher education institutions are needed, but what will be the impact on quality and standards? How do schools tackle the challenges of access to basic education, especially considering inequalities in rural education provision compared to what's available in cities? How can gender inequality be addressed, to encourage more girls into education? What role will technology play in how education is delivered? New thinking is needed across the school sector to develop models which provide young people with the right skills for entrepreneurship, as well as employment.

The number of universities in South Asia cannot meet current demand, let alone the increased demand of the future. The British Council estimates that 2000 more universities will be built in the next decade, but that each of them will need to admit 100,000 students to even make a dent in the likely demand. Higher and further education provision must scale up. What business model will universities adopt to respond effectively to young people's and employers' changing needs? Can states meet the demand for investment in new institutions, or is there a growing role for private education providers? What does the academic programme of the future look like – is the current degree model sustainable or, indeed, desirable? There is a growing need for further education colleges that provide a skills-oriented education, so will they fill the gap?

The pace of change in the region is rapid. It demands flexibility and innovation. South Asia must act now to create an education sector that harnesses its young people's potential, and ensure that the demographic dividend is not wasted.

CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

Participation and access to universities

As higher education moves onto the radar as an important component of manpower development, governments across the spectrum are re-examining their strategy with respect to participation and access. This has certainly been the case in the region's largest economy, India, where the issue has crash-landed onto the policy agenda in the past two decades, according to Dr. Pushkar, university lecturer, and writer on higher education. "Certainly, the Ministry of Human Resource Development, the prime minister and others now seem to be talking more about higher education, and they are saying the right things." Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed, chief executive officer of the Higher Education Commission in Pakistan echoes this sentiment. "It is a good time in the higher education sector, things are moving fast. The government of Pakistan realises that higher education is important," he notes.

This focus is also evident in some of the region's smaller economies. In Nepal, at a fairly nascent stage of growth with the sector comprising of six fully-established parent universities (albeit with a significant number of offshoots) a policy review is currently underway to determine the appropriate role of higher education in Nepal and what the country hopes to achieve from the higher education sector, observes Mohan Manandhar, chief executive officer of the Niti Foundation, a Nepali non-profit organisation that funds policy research.

The most immediate manifestation of this is in a renewed drive to boost capacity and finds ways of injecting funding into the higher education sector. Only India (with its nine-fold increase in planned higher education expenditure between 2007-12), and Pakistan (with its boost of funding between 2002-07) have shown inclination to devote significant additional public money to the sector in recent years. Crunched public-sector budgets are forcing stakeholders to consider appropriate strategies to boost capacity, and at the

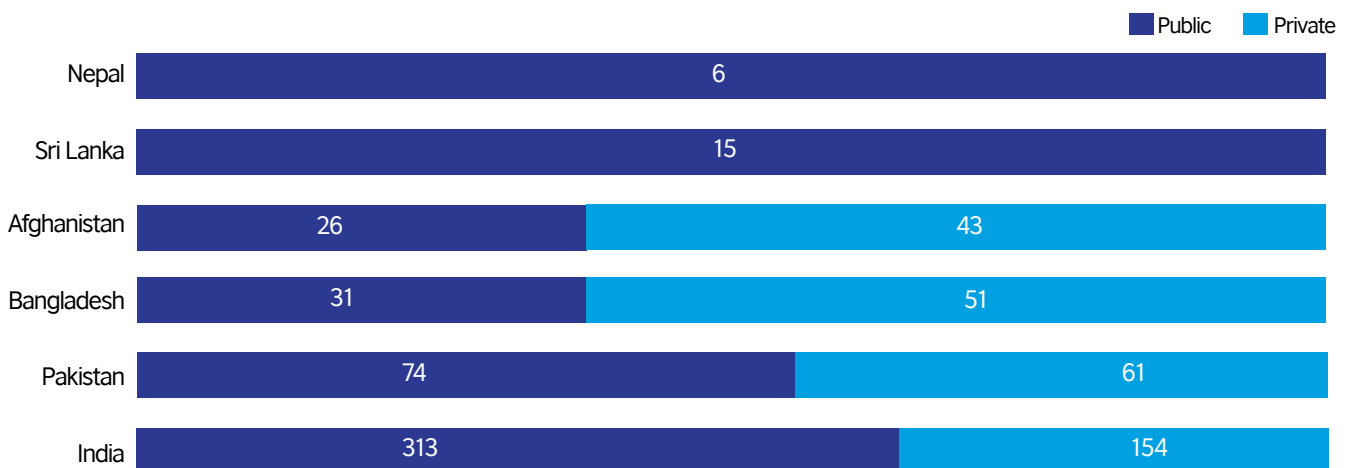
same time develop strategies for driving more equitable access.

"There is an economic imbalance," notes Pawan Agarwal, advisor on higher education to the Planning Commission of India. "Wealthier families can educate their children better and these kids then are able to access the higher quality public institutions, which are largely state subsidised. Meanwhile, poorer families find their children unable to access the more competitive public institutions, and having to pay more (which they cannot afford) for private higher education. We need to reflect on the necessary policies to address these issues."

Attempts to address this concern in South Asia have included fee caps, multi-tiered pricing structures with reduced fees for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, and the provision of student loans. According to Mr Manandhar, chief executive officer of the Niti Foundation, affirmative action policies have been instituted in Nepal to increase the participation of excluded minority groups in education across all levels. These have taken the form of tuition waivers and quota systems.

One major barrier to surmount in many of these countries is that of physical access. Despite rapid urbanisation taking place in some of these economies, limited infrastructure and difficult terrain means that rural, remote populations face a huge disadvantage in accessing higher education. At the same time, while average income and household consumption is rising as a general trend across all markets, financial constraints are also a major hurdle for many potential students. Regional drivers, such as continued migration of labour suggest that demand for higher education will continue, despite the various constraints on supply. In Nepal, for instance, the increased demand for higher education is linked to greater numbers of Nepalese who have successfully emigrated abroad for work. Remittances to the country have increased, giving rise to increased household spending on higher education, according to experts interviewed for this report.

Number of universities, public and private



Note. To best effort, universities, rather than colleges or vocational institutions have been accounted for in the data. Inconsistency in definitions across national sources means figures between countries may not be directly comparable.

Source: National higher education agencies.

The role of public and private universities

With public funding stretched, the past two decades have seen governments turn to the private sector to boost higher education capacity, though the extent and pace of growth has varied across countries. From being virtually non-existent in the 1980s, private higher education providers have grown to accommodate a significant proportion of students in a number of countries.

While Sri Lanka and Nepal have so far largely resisted calls to open up the higher education sector to private forces, countries such as Bangladesh have seen moderate growth in related activity— in 2011 the private sector accounted for 59% of the country's tertiary sector education enrolments (not including campuses affiliated to the National University). No formal private universities have yet been established, though this is likely to change in the very near future, as noted by a Bangladesh academic. "There is a realisation in the government that the private sector must play an important role in higher education as government on its own cannot bear the huge expense that is needed," he says. "Despite all the difficulties and

hindrances, some of the private institutions have really done very well and I believe that the future quality of higher education in Bangladesh will be dominantly governed by the private universities."

India's landscape is quite different, due to the more highly developed nature of its higher education system and its federal government structure. India's system employs a combination of public universities, private universities, institutes of national importance, and so-called "deemed" universities (being universities that are granted university status by the Ministry of Higher Education on the advice of the UGC, rather than through legislation). Within the public sector there is an additional division between centrally administered and state universities, the latter being the majority provider and the principal focus for the Indian government going forward.

"Private growth has, however, been uneven", writes Mr Agarwal, adviser on higher education to the government. "It is restricted to a few fields of study and confined to some states and regions. "There are concerns about the quality of private provision and complaints of many private providers indulging in unfair practices." But like other countries in the region,

the private sector in India has played a vital role in absorbing excess demand from those unable to secure places in public universities, but with the means of paying for a private education. In the rest of the region, growth has been robust, and many private providers have focussed on professional disciplines with low start-up costs, such as management, IT and business studies.

Research-based postgraduate programmes in short supply

With a few exceptions (most notably India's elite, world renowned Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) and Indian Institute of Management (IIM)), the postgraduate education landscape in South Asia is at a very early

stage of development. Research-based postgraduate programmes are in particularly short supply, a symptom of the region's reliance on teaching-focused colleges to expand access to well-staffed research-led universities. Still, there has been something of a "quiet revolution" in the quantity of academic research emanating from Pakistan of late with the country registering some 800 research publications in 2002 to 6,200 in 2011 on the Scimago database on research publications, says Professor Javed Laghari, chairman of the country's HEC.

Research activity has not taken root to this extent in Nepal, where according to Mr Manandhar of the Niti Foundation, "Higher education is very much focused

OPINION FROM THE BRITISH COUNCIL'S 21ST CENTURY UNIVERSITIES CONFERENCE

- There needs to be an effort to create a provision for mobility amongst SA countries by devising a South Asian Accord, perhaps through initiative by the British Council. It must also venture into Accreditation norms for South Asian countries bringing all countries on one platform - *Dr.. Ravi P Singh, IGNOU, India*
- "We cannot import models which work in other countries" - *Prof Dr.. Sohail, VC, Lahore University, Pakistan*
- The only way to assure quality for long-term planning is to contemplate partnerships among state and private universities - *Prof Dr.. M. Massoum Azizi, Afghanistan*
- We need to create 'Global Graduates and hence we can't look only at IQ, we must also look at EQ and soft skills - *Rajay Naik, Director of Govt. & External Affairs, OU, UK*
- Increased communication between industry and academia is required - *Raman Madhok, Managing Director, CMI, FPE Ltd, Mumbai, India*
- We must find ways to innovate and exceed expectation of students in HE - *Nizam Razzaq, Business*
- Would like to form a committee to look after various HE models and to identify the defects in our current Educational system - *Prof Dr.. M. Massoum Azizi, Kabul Medical University, Afghanistan*
- Concrete efforts will be made to adopt best practices of the presented case study for further promoting entrepreneurial culture by the COMSATS Institute of Information Technology in particular and higher education institutions in Pakistan in general - *Prof. Dr. Izhar Hussain, COMSATS, Islamabad, Pakistan*
- Planning Commissions and HECs of the Asian countries should fund the final year research projects of the students at HEIs with certain guidelines in order to get solution to their economic problems. This way the students' projects would be more practicable than theoretical. This area needs to be discussed. - *Muhammad Ayub Siddiqui, PhD, Bahria University, Islamabad, Pakistan*

on teaching only.” Despite having one of the highest proportions of students pursuing postgraduate studies of any country in the region, only 1% of higher education campuses offer study up to PhD level. More commonly, the postgraduate programmes on offer tend to be practically oriented towards the labour market. The rising number of NGOs in Nepal is driving demand for specialised courses in women’s studies, environmental management and developmental studies as donor agencies pour into the country. Another trend is for students to gravitate towards business courses, owing to the growing number of banks and private campuses that are opening up in the country, with the general perception being business school graduates have a higher potential of securing employment later. In Pakistan, Professor Mukhtar Ahmed, chief executive officer of the HEC speaks of course preferences being at the “mercy of market forces”. Favourites there changed quickly between IT, telecoms, business and engineering. A consequence of limited high-quality postgraduate educational opportunities within South Asia, many students seek postgraduate study abroad. India, for instance, is consistently among the two largest foreign markets (along with China) for higher education in the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia. The United Kingdom played host to over 21,000 Indian postgraduate students in 2011- 12; the United States hosted over 59,000, along with 2,041 from Bangladesh,

2,822 from Nepal, 1,900 from Pakistan, and 1,412 from Sri Lanka. In some markets, outward bound students represent a not insignificant proportion of postgraduate students electing to study at home.

Greater emphasis on quality required

Though there has been substantive growth in higher education capacity in the past few years, on some levels this has been at the expense of quality. Standards across higher education are variable across the markets examined, but South Asia as a whole remains well below the average on various international university rankings. The top institutions tend to be either large public universities offering a broad range of faculties and courses, or well-funded public institutes of technology or management.

Competition to gain admissions to these institutions is fierce. In the case of the large public institutions, the issue of affordability rears its head. “The result is that parents expend an awful lot of time and energy in trying to get their children into these public institutions, and the perception is that the non-state sector is not as good,” says an administrator from a university in Sri Lanka. “Another option, for those that can afford it, is to send children overseas for higher education in European countries and the United States”.

Globally ranked universities from South Asia, 2012-13

Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur	• Times Higher Education World University Rankings; 226-250
Indian Institute of Technology Bombay	• Times Higher Education World University Rankings; 251-275 • QS World University Rankings; 227
Indian Institute of Technology Roorkee	• Times Higher Education World University Rankings; 351-400 • QS World University Rankings; 401-450
Indian Institute of Technology Delhi (IITD)	• QS World University Rankings; 212
Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur (IITK)	• QS World University Rankings; 278
University of Delhi	• QS World University Rankings; 401-450
National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST) Islamabad	• QS World University Rankings; 401-45

Source: Times Higher Education World University Rankings, QS World University Rankings.

In the private sector, there are concerns over regulation, transparency and accountability to students. While countries like Sri Lanka have made some efforts in building quality assurance frameworks, such monitoring mechanisms are largely left wanting across the region. Though under the responsibility of the higher education oversight bodies (the UGC or HEC), in practice these bodies may lack the necessary resources or know-how for effective monitoring of standards. Training is needed, and there has been very little activity on that front, says Dr. Athula Pitigala-Arachchi, chief executive officer of the Asia Pacific Institute of Information Technology in Sri Lanka: “In the last decade there has been a drive to improve quality, with some quality assurance activities going on even in cells inside of universities.”

Credible, independent accreditation bodies are therefore a high priority across the region. Opportunistic behaviour by some private institutions has tarnished the credibility of the private sector in many South Asian markets, and for reasons of reputation and affordability, students tend to favour the large state universities.

The region contains no universities in the top 100 of the Times Higher Education (THE) and just three of the top 400 of the THE rankings (all Indian Institutes of Technology). The situation is similar across the QS 2012-13 World University Rankings, with South Asia

There has to be (at least for the private sector) an independent body to accredit and assure quality. And there must be some independent quality assurance for the public sector as well. The current way must change
CEO, Asia Pacific Institute of Information Technology, Sri Lanka

There are cases of private universities selling qualifications, which impacts credibility
CEO, Asia Pacific Institute of Information Technology, Sri Lanka

contributing just six of the top 500 in the QS rankings (five from India, one from Pakistan). The top institutions tend to be either large public universities offering a broad range of faculties and courses, or well-funded public institutes of technology or management.

The need to de-politicise University Leadership

The universities need to work to “depoliticise” the sector, while raising standards of provision and quality assurance mechanisms in both the private and public sectors. But politics and academia remain uneasy bedfellows in the governance and leadership of prominent universities across the region, and this has implications for the transparency and quality of higher education provision, along with academic decision-making and operations.

In India, the politicisation of academic appointments at senior management level raises “serious concerns about the quality of academic leadership”, says Pawan Agarwal, a higher education advisor to the Indian government. Indian commentator Dr. Pushkar observes a pattern in some Indian states of academics unwilling to take up (senior management) positions “because of the political pressures they would face”.

In Bangladesh, a recent World Bank report noted that “the governance arrangements in four of the largest public universities and many higher education colleges fuel politicisation of academic decision making and operations”. Weak governance has implications for quality across the board, and ultimately for the quality of graduates entering the labour force. As observed by a policymaker in Bangladesh, this is “why the top people at universities tend to be very weak” and “Vice chancellors have a tendency to promote individuals who may not be academically sound.”

In Nepal, changes in government have resulted in changes in university leadership. Politicisation in the sector is such that Nepal’s UGC has identified addressing the problem of political issues affecting

higher education organisation and institutions as its most important issue. The issue is also one that colours the debate in Sri Lanka: due to political interference, top quality people are bypassed by those who are not adequately qualified, notes Dr. Athula Pitigala-Arachchi, chief executive officer of the Asia Pacific Institute of Information Technology.

Foreign universities see potential

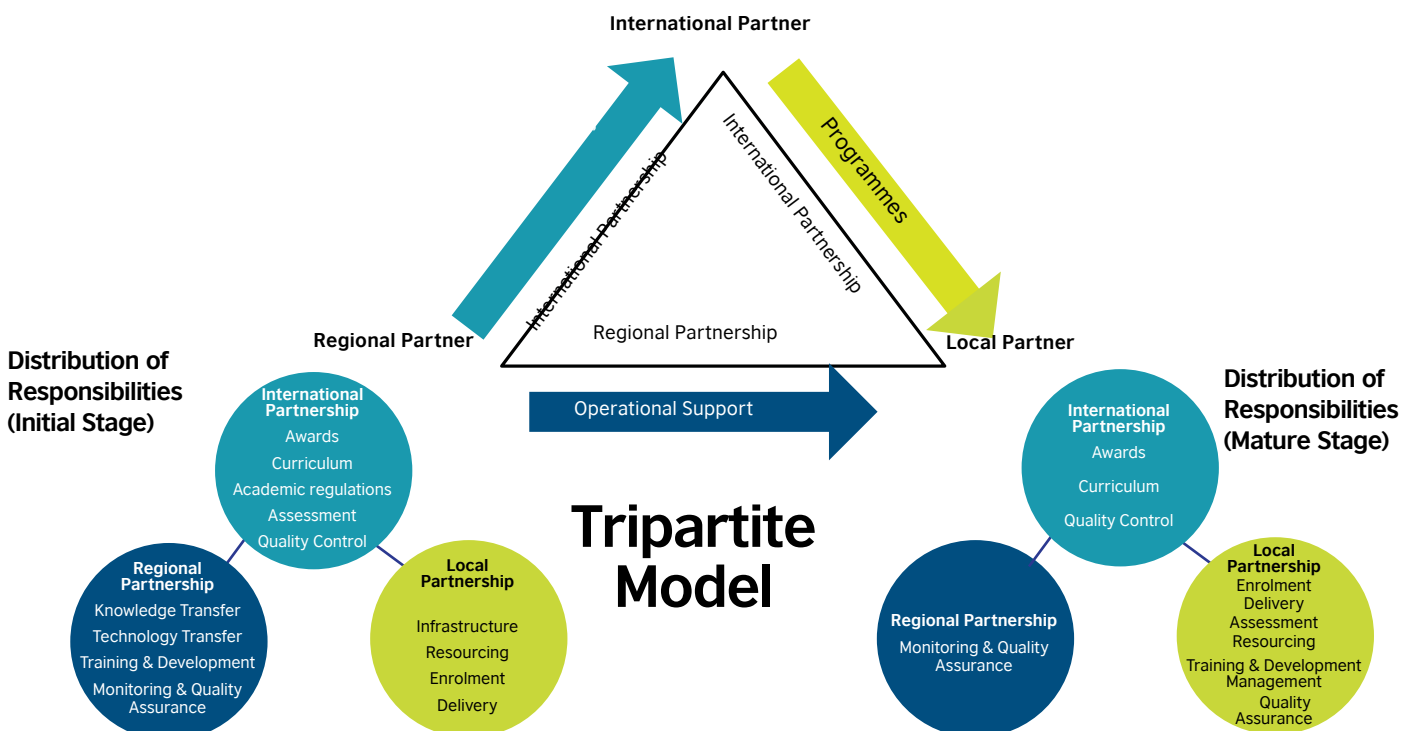
The involvement of foreign universities is predominantly in the form of collaborations with existing institutions, though not always with the established public universities. Such arrangements currently exist in all countries in the region – reportedly 600 foreign institutions cooperate in India in this manner – predominantly with universities in the United Kingdom, United Kingdom and Canada. India, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka are either currently considering or have recently passed legislation to enable foreign universities to establish independent campuses. India, in particular, has drawn a lot of interest to its Foreign Universities Bill; despite gaining cabinet approval in 2010 after four years

of deliberation, the bill has sat in parliament for over two years due to opposition from various quarters

Though policy-makers widely recognise the contribution that foreign providers can offer both to increase capacity and improve quality, each country in the region has a different lens by which they view the participation of foreign players. From an inbound perspective, in light of the successful partnerships and models deployed in other parts of Asia, the enthusiasm of foreign providers has been tempered by bureaucratic hurdles and long delays in gaining approval to operate—if at all. Nonetheless, as the number of South Asian students heading offshore for education indicates, the demand for education from foreign providers is very strong, and South Asia continues to represent an exciting “frontier market” for a plethora of international institutions.

The Tripartite model

Though there is a smattering of international universities across South Asia, the involvement of universities is predominantly in the form of collaborations with existing



Source: Slides from Dr. Athula Pitigala-Arachchi, CEO, APIIT Sri Lanka

institutions, though not always with the established public universities. Such arrangements currently exist in all countries in the region – reportedly 600 foreign institutions cooperate in India in this manner – predominantly with universities in the United Kingdom, United States and Canada.

Recent years have seen progress towards liberalisation of regulations governing foreign institutions in South Asia. India, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka are either currently considering or have recently passed legislation to enable foreign universities to establish independent campuses. India, in particular, has drawn a lot of interest to its Foreign Universities Bill; despite gaining cabinet approval in 2010 after four years of deliberation, the bill has sat in parliament for over two years due to opposition from various quarters. Stakeholders from both sides are exercising some restraint in driving forward the opportunity. “There have been MOUs signed between many of the foreign Bangladeshi universities for exchange of students, joint degree programs, articulation agreements,” says a senior administrator from the country. “However, the cost of education in most of the developed foreign countries is much higher than that in Bangladesh and the outcome of the MOUs is not very encouraging at this point. Some of the institutions claim themselves to be the local branch of the foreign universities, but such institutions still do not have legal status (in Bangladesh).”

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University Administrator, Bangladesh

OPINION

Mr. Rajay Naik, Director of Government and External affairs, The Open University in the UK, spoke at the 21st Century Universities conference and made the following abridged remarks

The world of further education is a hugely fast moving area. There are several areas that I would like to use set a framework for the conversation to follow.

Firstly, we talk a lot in these debates about systems in what we need to do about higher education in South Asia to create the skills to meet demand. Talking in this way sometimes gets us off the hook in dealing with some very thorny issues, but in fact the way universities deliver is not generic. Universities are autonomous institutions – that's part of the genius of higher education – and so the remedies, solutions and interventions must also be suited to particular circumstances. A colleague told me once that higher education is like a symphony: the violins, horns and all the other instruments must play their own parts to come together and make a wonderful piece of music. Similarly, all universities need to play their distinctive roles to get the skills and workforces right for what is needed in the 21st Century.

Secondly, we are all focused on delivering the right academic education what we need to really do to drive an economy is skills. Skills are the most important thing - we can't keep creating artificial distinctions between different forms of education. It's important we try to break down the distinctions in order to focus completely on the types of skills that students need.

Thirdly, we believe the Open University is the pre-eminent online learning institution on the planet. Technology has been a big part of this but my concern is that there is a huge amount of hyperbole about the subject - some say the technology transforms all our lives to the point that we will all sell our campuses. But we think that university education will continue to have face-to-face and discursive learning at its core. Yes, 75% of all Facebook contacts on mobile and high street stores are losing market share to online competitors and you can now download music. Yet live music has

never been more popular and so too the people in higher education still matter. Our students like the way we use technology but tell us it would be for nothing were it not for the support and guidance received from associate lecturers. The lecturers form cornerstone of our success to engage students and help them through their experience. The people matter, not just the technology.

Fourthly, all the debate so far has been about young people but the future success of Universities is not just about our 18-year-olds, because many of us are going through multiple changes of employment during the course of our career. Years ago, you could bet on a Civil Service bureaucrat being the same job for many years, but not really these days.

BEST BLOGS

WHY IT MAKES SENSE FOR PAKISTANI AND UK UNIVERSITIES TO BE PARTNERS

As Pakistani universities face many of the same issues as those of their UK counterparts, the British Council's Nishat Riaz says that institutional partnerships between the UK and Pakistan will help both countries achieve their goals.

During discussions with colleagues from the UK education sector, it becomes clear that Pakistan's universities are facing similar challenges to those faced in the UK – despite differences between the two countries and their institutions.

Differences between the UK's and Pakistan's higher education

What's different? Among many things, size, population, priorities and approach differ: The UK makes up one percent of the world's population. Pakistan, on the other hand, is the sixth most populous country in the world.

Education is one of the highest priorities for the UK. According to the Times Higher Education World Rankings, UK universities occupy three of the top ten spots, seven of the top 50 and eleven of the top 100. Pakistan, however, is struggling to position education as a priority – despite improved results in recent years – with around 25 million children out of school and only seven percent having access to higher education.

UK higher education institutions are connected to industry and business, and play a critical role in transferring knowledge to these. Industry and academia in Pakistan are worlds apart, and don't even listen to each other.

The UK has adopted an entrepreneurial approach that doesn't preclude academic achievement. But Pakistan's university leaders find it challenging to balance these two aspirations. The list goes on. Yet I see some crucial similarities.

Similarities

Both the UK and Pakistan have had to contend with major funding cuts over the last few years. The budget for Pakistan's higher education sector – following political pressure – has been reduced by over 60 percent in 2011 and 2012. It was around the same time that universities in England were facing cuts of 12 percent.

Both countries have higher education funding agencies – the four for England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales respectively in the UK, and the Higher Education Commission (HEC) in Pakistan. Higher education institutions are regulated by these agencies in each country through formal operating frameworks, which are followed by all approved and recognised universities. In the UK, this operating framework explains how higher education providers will be held to account and regulated. Similarly, for any university to operate and be eligible for government funding, the HEC in Pakistan sets out defined rules and regulations.

Universities are autonomous in both countries, with structures and systems that allow them to make their own decisions. Universities on both sides can appoint, recruit and promote staff at different levels and raise funding through programmes.

Finally, universities on both sides face challenges of keeping student enrolment and league table rankings high, and maintaining the balance between research and teaching.

These and many others factors pose a similar set of opportunities – as well as challenges – to university leaders and administrators for survival and expansion.

Opportunities for both countries: partnerships

Some of the similarities above will make it easier for universities in the two countries to understand each other and to form partnerships. Given that they also face similar challenges, it can make sense to tackle those together.

There is huge and growing interest from UK universities in working across both research and teaching areas with universities in Pakistan. For many, this is an opportunity to expand international research in specific discipline areas, while for others it is an opportunity for academic faculty to be involved in development work. Some UK universities who have strong links with Pakistani communities in their city see it as a way of strengthening their community work.

So far, more than 76 UK universities have formal partnerships and long-term agreements with Pakistani higher education institutions. 98 percent of all Pakistani vice-chancellors and rectors have received leadership training in the UK since 2010, which has allowed them to form relationships with the UK. New partnerships and collaborative programmes between universities in the UK and Pakistan are a direct outcome of the training programme every year. Last year alone, 14 new transnational education partnerships were agreed. A new set of partnership agreements is underway with the University of Leicester, which is celebrating a leap by 35 places in the ranking table, the highest among the top 200 institutions.

Whether differences increase or reduce, universities are developing international partnerships with an expectation of long-term benefits on both sides.

HIGHER EDUCATION AND EMPLOYABILITY

A new paradigm, a new challenge –
South Asia and UK perspectives

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Potential

* South Asia's key strength is its favourable demography, with a youthful profile full of potential. The demand for higher education is very strong and enrolment rates in universities have increased 50% over the past 10 years. Yet there is a paradox of high graduate unemployment, often significantly higher than total country employment.

Challenges

* Private provision has helped to meet the demand for higher education places, but this has led to issues over the quality of education. There is a big variety in the quality of graduates, with a need to review South Asia's weak regulatory and education accreditation frameworks.

* There is obvious disconnect between labour market needs and higher education provision. There is a lack of real information about the performance of the labour market and is compounded by a lack of coordination at all levels of Government.

* In spite of more university graduates, employers are struggling to find good workers. There is a consensus that curricula are outdated and work skills missing from university education.

Solutions

* While there is still a lack of planning in South Asian countries, governments are starting to work with various chambers of commerce to develop better labour market information.

* The quality and quantity of university graduates is important to ensure workforce competitiveness. But as much as these countries need professionals, managers and other skilled workers, there is also a need for low and medium skilled workers.

* As a result of this need, the concept of vocational and technical education is starting to gain momentum with various skills development policies focused on upskilling workers.

POTENTIAL

South Asia’s key strength is its favourable demography. The countries of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka account for approximately 25% of the world’s population today. South Asia is also enviably young: in India alone, the average age of its population will be 29 years in 2020; in China, it will be 37 years and Japan 48 years.

The demographic dividend translates to growth in several ways. It holds the promise of an expanding middle class, affordable labour force, productivity growth, and thereby giving rise to greater economic growth. However, the same demographics can prove to be a curse: where youth fail to find jobs, unemployment can lead to social unrest and have a destabilising effect on an economy.

Youth unemployment is a concern almost everywhere in the world, but the sheer scale of a potential missed opportunity is especially stark in South Asia: globally about 25% of all 15-24 year olds are unemployed or not in education; in South Asia, the proportion is 31.1%. A challenge for the region is driving change that will ensure a competitive, skilled workforce well-equipped for the vagaries of a knowledge economy. To achieve

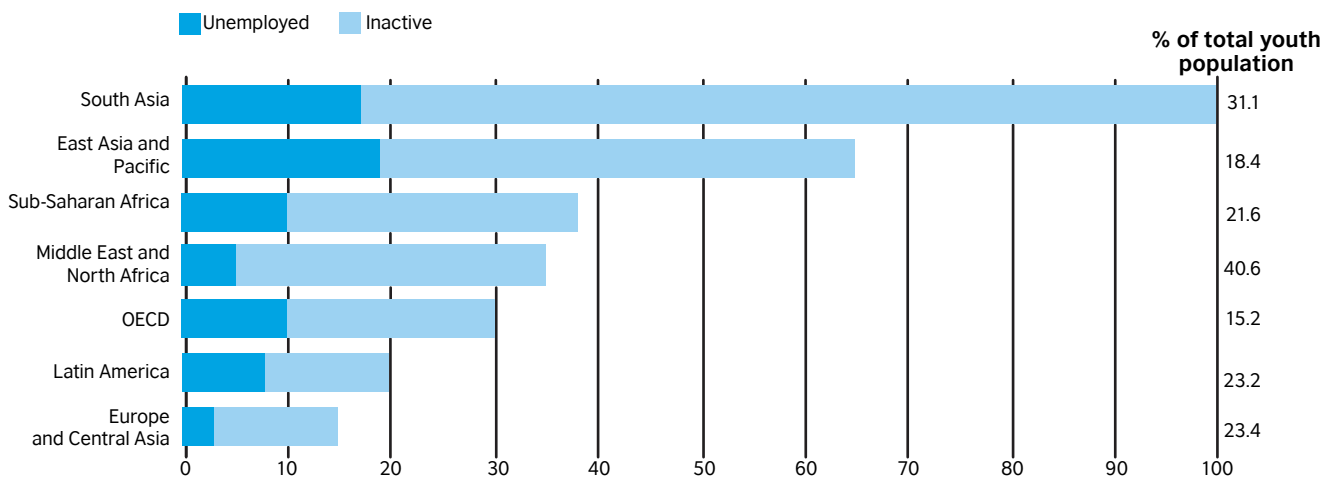
this, there is a common agreement that both the quality and quantity of university graduates matter.

Hungry for more education

Steady economic growth coupled with years of investment in primary and secondary education has developed a sizeable middle class in South Asia with a growing appetite for higher levels of education. Post-secondary education comes in a variety of sources ranging from industry and government programmes, vocational schools and non-profit organisations. South Asians, however, place a high premium on entering the labour market with a university diploma. The proportion of secondary school graduates enrolling in higher education institutions have more than doubled in each country between 2004 and 2011.

Enrolment rates in universities have increased 50% over the past 10 years. Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka represent about one-quarter of the world’s population. Beyond just sheer strength in numbers, the region is also encouragingly youthful. Following years of investment in increasing primary and secondary school enrolment, its youth are now seeking higher levels of education. This has

Youth unemployment and inactivity*, by region, 2012 or latest



*15-24 year olds not in education. Source: OECD, World Bank, The Economist.

Unemployment in South Asia

Country	Estimated graduate unemployment (latest available year)	Total country unemployment (2012)
Afghanistan	65%	NA
Bangladesh	47%	5.0%
India	33%	8.5%
Nepal	Over 20%	NA
Pakistan	28%	6.0%
Sri Lank	7.8%	4.0%

Note: Data may not directly comparable due to different definitions of “unemployment” and data collection methods. Source: Economist Intelligence Unit, ILO, World Bank, Labour ministry surveys, expert interviews.*

resulted in greater public and private investment devoted to expanding capacity of and access to universities.

Despite positive employment growth and higher university participation, there is a paradox of high graduate unemployment, often significantly higher than total country employment. In countries like Bangladesh, Pakistan and India, graduate unemployment is 4-9 times higher than total country unemployment.

CHALLENGES

Quality and the Private Sector

Private provision has helped with demand, but this has led to issues over quality of education. Much of the increase in demand has been fulfilled by private universities, often providing degree programmes where student demand is found. These for-profit institutions, not obliged to follow public university curriculum, standards and other benchmarks, have produced a great variance in quality of graduates. South Asia's weak regulatory and education accreditation frameworks need to be reviewed to ensure quality of graduates matter, not just quantity.

There are few examples of this happening. Through a public-private partnership, BRAC (formerly Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee) developed a programme to train and enhance the knowledge of 350 teachers in rural secondary schools. Teachers were taught innovative teaching methods through the use of multimedia and games, and encouraged to develop new curriculum that encourages teamwork. At the university-level, Bangladesh's Shanto-Mariam University of Creative Technology (SMUCT), South Asia's first design university, has an ethos to deliver both creative and technological education by equipping students with a strong foundation in transformable managerial skills that prepares them for the rigors of professional life. With a Design, Development and Display Centre for creative education, textile lab facilities, a furniture workshop and career counselling services, SMUCT creates a supportive and stimulating environment for its students to experiment with.

Closing the gap: education-employer mismatch

There is an obvious disconnect between labour market needs and higher education provision. Despite the information, communication and technology (ICT) boom in India and more recently Sri Lanka, there is a shortage of skilled ICT workers in South Asia according to experts. This is an example of the broader trend of the discrepancy between the kind of skills demanded

An upsurge in demand for general business education

In 2000, there were about 600 colleges in India offering about 70,000 MBA diplomas. By the end of 2009, the number had increased to 1,400 colleges offering about 120,000 such degrees. Demand continues to rise but the trend is not new: business education has a long history and appeal in South Asia. In 1955, the Institute of Business Administration (IBA) introduced its MBA programme at Karachi in collaboration with the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Business. Two years later, evening classes were offered to cater to working professionals, and by 1982 the Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) was launched. Similarly, IBA Dhaka was founded in 1966, expanding from just offering Master in Business Administration (MBA) to Master in Philosophy (MPhil) and PhD programs in the 1970s before starting the BBA in 1993. Dr. Gazi Mahabubul Alam, Professor in Education Economics, University of Malaya, explains the rise in popularity of the IBAs and similar business degrees is linked to how these schools were started. When they first opened, IBAs targeted professionals in well-paid jobs to join their MBA programmes and further develop key skills. After completing the programme, they returned to their old jobs and received promotions, says Dr. Gazi. "It wasn't so much because of the knowledge they gained in the programme, but that they were already good engineers, good bankers and so on. The extra knowledge was in the way of better English language, communication and related skills," he explains. However, seeing the success of these graduates, other young adults demanded similar business education in hopes of rising up the ladder in the corporate world.

by labour markets and the number of graduates in key disciplines for South Asia. The problem starts with nascent labour market information systems, and is compounded by the lack of coordination at all levels of government.

Despite more university graduates, employers are struggling to find good workers. A disturbing paradox is mounting and there is a need for a tripartite collaboration between policymakers, universities and employers. Education quality is low in universities and employers lament over two types of skills shortages: (a) not enough graduates in specialised skills needed within high growth sectors, and (b) where graduates have these skills, they are still not employable because English language, computer and other softer skills such as communication and problem-solving abilities are missing.

The paradox is undeniable: South Asia is producing university graduates in steady numbers, but the labour market is finding it difficult to hire graduates with the right skills. Labour market studies conducted by private organisations, chambers of commerce and academics highlight various aspects of the problem but according to experts interviewed for this study, governments of South Asia seem fixated on increasing access to universities. Reversing this “diploma disease” requires structural changes, at both policy and institutional levels: reassess education received before students enter university, change degree offerings and pedagogy at universities and develop policies that support a 360-degree transformation.

Change the input: outmoded styles of learning

Curriculum is outdated and work skills missing from university education. It is not uncommon for South Asian universities to review curriculum only once every five years. It is also not uncommon for professors and lecturers to have no real work experience when teaching job-oriented degrees. This has led to substandard quality of education found in universities,

Changing the Curriculum – who is doing what (or not)

First, curriculum must be updated more regularly, depending on labour market needs. In Nepal, universities only review or renew their curriculums once every five years, making them unresponsive to labour market changes and graduates unemployable, says a senior personnel at Nepal’s University Grants Commission. Similarly in other South Asian countries, experts agree that public universities, in particular, are not adapting to labour needs. This involves a change in both content and pedagogy.

In Afghanistan, the government recognises this urgent need. In 2011, the Ministry of Higher Education appointed a committee of university professors and other stakeholders to review the curriculum and produce a guidebook to change curriculum based on labour market needs. This requires university departments to revise key goals, while considering employment opportunities for graduates. The outcome of these policy changes will take time to show effect, but steps are in the right direction. Policy statements are plenty, and papers with broad goals may be encouraging but they need to follow through with change. Dr. Allah Malik, Managing Director and CEO, National Education Foundation, and Director General, Academy for Educational Planning and Management at the Ministry of Education, Training and Standards in Higher Education, explains that the Pakistan’s National Education Policy in 2009 emphasised a demand-driven approach to education, but this has not been put into practice. Policies are often missing implementation metrics and clear strategies.

with skills that have limited real-world application. Course grades are often almost wholly based on the performance in a final exam, instead of encouraging presentations, case studies and other types of analytical assignments. Public universities are especially unaccustomed to change, while private universities have proven to be more enterprising. In both public and private universities, however, internships and other career development services are just starting to take shape and importance.

Professor Rakesh Basant, Chairperson Centre for Innovation, Incubation and Entrepreneurship (CIIE), India explains the first big issue is the type of education students receive: “Are we creating people who can learn quickly enough? The way we do learning here creates individuals who are not proactive enough. They wait for instructions rather than take initiative.” Universities operate within a larger education system from primary to secondary education that still emphasise rote-learning as a way to educating. This requires a structural change to pedagogy and introducing more critical and analytical education tools.

SOLUTIONS

Greater connectivity and adaptability is the way forward. There is a unanimous consensus that collaboration between industry and academia is critical, but how to achieve this effectively remains unclear. Specific examples where this is done well exist, but replication of successes is a challenge. The global labour market is changing rapidly and ensuring graduates have both technical skills and softer, employable skills will remain a challenge.

Better planning

Once the “basics are right”, referring to quality of education within universities, Amit Garga, partner at Parthenon Group, says then there is a need for greater connectivity with industry needs. Dr. Gazi from University of Malaya echoes a similar sentiment: “You need to make sure the private sector is involved, together with universities and the government, to determine what type of graduates you are producing. Right now, everyone is operating in isolation and they blame each other for the labour market not getting quality graduates.”

There is lack of planning in South Asian countries – policymakers are often not actively looking at how many secondary-level graduates, and how many tertiary-level graduates in various degree programmes are needed for the labour market. However, some changes are happening. In Bangladesh, Musharraf Hossain explains that the government is starting to work with various chambers of commerce and the ILO to develop better labour market information. In other countries, there are smaller, disparate policies to increase graduate employment, without fixing other parts of the graduate unemployment equation. In Nepal, for example, where jobs for graduates were scarce, the government introduced a scheme to provide collateral-free loans of up to Rp200,000 (US\$2,000) to university graduates in a bid to encourage self-employment and a culture of entrepreneurship.

Focus on skills at all levels

The quality and quantity of university graduates is important to ensure workforce competitiveness. But as much as these countries need professionals, managers and other highly skilled workers, there is also a need for low and medium skilled workers. The concept of vocational and technical education is starting to gain momentum with various skills development policies focused on upskilling workers. In Afghanistan, starting from March 2014, high school students from Grade 10 will be divided into three areas of studies: social sciences, natural sciences, technical vocational sciences.

India has one of the most ambitious plans here. The Ministry for Labour and Employment published a National Skills Development Policy in 2009, with a target of skilling 500m people by 2022. One of the outcomes is a similar push for higher enrolment in the school system from Grades 9-12, adding vocational education as a core part of school curriculum. “By funding about 200 such colleges, the government is taking significant steps to demonstrate its commitment to upskilling graduates. Hopefully in the future, we will also see an offering of shorter 2-year programmes integrated into higher education at the university level as credits to a Bachelor in vocational education,” says Ajay Goel, Wadhvani Foundation, Skills Development Network, India

OPINION

A solution for vocational skills

Vocational Skills for Employability and Empowerment: Helping Less-Affluent and Marginalised Sections of Society in Pakistan - Dr. Allah Bakhsh Malik, UNESCO Confucius Laureate and Federal Additional Secretary in Government of Pakistan

Due to arcane critical issues of access, equity, quality and governance in education sector in developing countries, many children have been deprived of opportunities to complete their formal education. Technical and Vocational Education - TVE has similar issues with more gravity than the formal sector and there are gaps between supply and demand, resulting in unemployment and poverty. While serious challenges obfuscate the access and quality in TVE, the fact remains that there are huge opportunities of employment at national and international level for a skilled workforce; leading to social and economic empowerment. The aim of emphasis on TVE around the globe is to address the issues of unemployment, abject poverty and to achieve comparative competitiveness in matching skills, for current and emerging job markets.

The challenges of access and quality of TVE are daunting, not only for regular enrolment in vocational institutions and colleges in the right age-cohort but also for those who are either drop-outs or never-to-school adult illiterates. The maverick mercurial questions however are; whether our engineering colleges, universities and TVE institutes have the capacity and institutional strength to accommodate the potential candidates? Do the existing TVE institutes have adequate institutional capacity, to enrol the eligible young people in formal TVE institutions and accommodate adult illiterates into technical trades like plumbing, electricians, mechanics, machinists etc.? Are there formal institutional linkages among

industrial concerns and TVE institutions to gauge the periodical demand continuously and design vocational courses accordingly to the market requirements? Is there an institutional mechanism to ensure symmetrical information about skill demand in Middle East and other parts of the world in collaboration with the Overseas Employment Corporation (of Pakistan) and disseminate the vital information to the TVE institutions to plan and produce the required skilled workforce?

Government has been partially successful in addressing some of the issues but there are huge gaps in policy and practice, which require to be bridged, by developing institutional capacity and making arrangements for a secure service delivery mechanism which is workable and viable in actual practical theatrics. The Government of Pakistan announced the National Education Policy 2009 and emphasized that, 'Government shall develop a suitable framework for technical and scientific education and training with close involvement of Chambers of Commerce and Industry'. In the first instance, there is a need to build adequate institutional capacity at federal and provincial level for more TVE institutes to enrol all eligible candidates. Secondly there is gigantic task to empower adult illiterates with vocational skills for a decent livelihood. The adult literacy (10+ years) rates are 58% for the overall population, with 69% for males and 46% for females. Thirdly there is a youth bulge - 65% of the population in Pakistan is under the age of 30 years and out of them 38 million are adult illiterates. Fourthly there is an urgent need to put in place the institutional arrangements for synergy among TVE institutes and industry and look for jobs of skilled labour in the international markets.

There are numerous examples and success stories where skill development has led to employment and economic empowerment. All the apprentices trained by National Logistic Cell are employed in Pakistan and Middle East. The graduates of institutes under the auspices of National Vocational and Technical Training Commission - NAVTEC - and provincial technical

authorities have been well received by employers in Pakistan and abroad. UNESCO Pakistan launched a project of rehabilitation of flood affected populations, by setting up 30 adult literacy and vocational centres in the areas of Southern Punjab after devastating floods of 2010 with 900 participants in three cycles of 3 months duration and trained 2700 adult illiterates. The participants were taught literacy and a lifelong vocational skill; females were taught sewing, stitching, embroidery and men were trained in plumbing, electrician, machinist, electrician and mechanics. A survey after three months revealed that all the participants were gainfully employed. Learning from the experience, Punjab Literacy and Livelihood Project, was designed and launched by Literacy and Non Formal Basic Education Department. 7500 learners were imparted TVE in collaboration with Punjab Vocational and Training Council . In all these instances, skill development squarely resulted in employability.

There is an incessant demand for TVE, leading to employability and there is a dire need to fill the wide deep chasm between supply and demand. After the 18th Constitutional Amendment, the subject of education has been devolved to provincial level and respective governments are charged with the statutory responsibilities to allocate adequate funds for TVE. There is an urgent requirement to update the curricula to encompass the latest technologies in TVE institutions. NAVTEC is responsible for promoting linkages among various stakeholders and to address the challenges faced by TVE institutes, including training and skill development. NAVTEC should also focus on underserved regions within the provinces . Synergy among NAVTEC and provincial vocational authorities can be conveniently ensured through an administrative arrangement; a Federal Commission may be constituted and headed by Federal Minister for Ministry of Education, Trainings and Standards in Higher Education. The national body should be responsible to develop National Qualification Framework, announce National Policy on TVE and introduce lifelong vocational education for adult illiterates dovetailing skill development with literacy and numeracy skills.

Solutions from an employer standpoint

Extracts from “Educating For Employability and Productivity: A Perspective From Employers” - Dr.. Sanrupt Misra CEO Carbon Black Business and Director Human Resources, Aditya Birla Group

.... So what do employers directly seek from the people they hire? This question in many ways also answers what the employers expect the education system to deliver. Employers invariably answer this question with two lenses or two thought processes- first, as employers in a particular sector and second as, employers in general. The sector lenses always seek high quality domain knowledge e.g. an automobile company hiring an automobile engineer wants its recruits to have deep knowledge of automobile engineering or the basics of it or a an EPC company hiring a Project Engineer expects a threshold of Project Management knowledge along with the base specialization such as Electrical or Civil Engineering. What are basics and what constitutes in-depth knowledge are, very subjective and need greater exploration, clarification and understanding. Often a certain level of clarity in thinking and ability to apply the concepts to live situation is equated with having in-depth knowledge. How do we build a shared understanding between the user sectors and the supplier academic institutions on this aspect is a perennial challenge where sporadic efforts have been made in an isolated fashion, predictably leading to unsustainable outcomes. The other aspect of the domain knowledge that employers seem to significantly need is “application orientation” and not just a great theoretical understanding while not knowing what to do with it and how to do it. For example, an automobile engineer knowing everything about gear boxes who has never seen one, let alone disassemble and re-assemble

one or a Project engineer who knows everything about PERT and CPM chart but is not able to draw up one for a simple live Project are classic examples of the “knowing –doing gap”. In other words, the employers seek “ready to use skills in the domain” or “application orientation in the real world”.

The second set of expectations of the employers is more around generic skills, attitude and values, though I found a distinct set of recurrent themes around specifics of what they expect, making those not so generic after all! More importantly, these leaders that I spoke with were as passionate about these generics as they were about the domain knowledge. Some of the skills that are becoming critical differentiators at the workplace include problem solving, team working, working with diverse set of people who are unlike you or unlike what you have interacted with, social skills to adapt to multicultural environment, a bias for execution, delivery and results as opposed to analysis and intellectualisation using jargons. Some of these are referred to as “soft skills” by popular management literature, but increasingly employers see these are core skills, in the absence of which one’s domain knowledge remains ineffective or unusable. Similarly, employers also have strong expectations around mental attitudes and orientation which include attributes and competencies such as long term thinking, resilience, judgment, strong values, and propensity to use innovation and creativity and learning agility.

There is significant consensus amongst the employers as to what is going wrong with our higher education system and what it is doing less of or needs to do more of without going into who is to blame or why is it so, though some of the latter has to be an inevitable part of the narrative on what can be done or should be done, which would be the concluding part of this write up. As a product of a highly competitive system where thousands compete to get into a handful of elite institution, the students have an entrenched DNA of being individualistic and seeking to excel by themselves and not be team players to understand

each other’s perspective or to collaborate. The success of such individual brilliance also manifests itself in over-reliance on analysis rather than judgment, leveraging of intellectual capability than sharing and seeking from others and finally; leads to an unspoken arrogance in interactions rather than display humility which is so essential to appreciate that there is so much more to learn in life. When the ability to learn gets restricted, eventual decline in performance catches up. Academic institutions need to be sensitive to this aspect of experienced reality of employers and must take thought through steps to address the same. Similarly, the focus on placements at the end of the academic course and the chase for marks seem to focus the students on getting marks and a job rather than learning and enhancing the capability to learn which will be the basis of sustained employability. ...

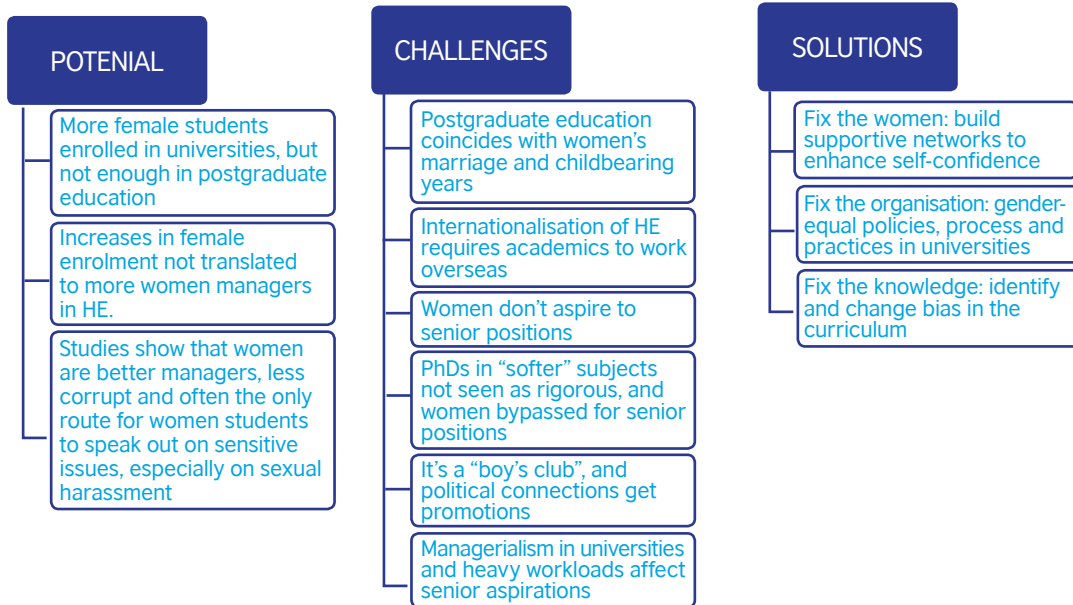
....Industry and academia need to collaborate if real benefit in upgrading the supply side of employment market has to materialize. The employers can do a few things as can the educational institutions. It has to be done not just in the spirit of being customers of talent and suppliers of talent rather as stakeholders in creating a better society. Conventional classroom education needs to be supplemented by access to learning through technology such as the kinds that Mass on-line open access courses offer. The curriculum must provide more flexible choice of courses that help the students build better perspective about the world for which their education has to be relevant. Teaching also must take into account the larger context by keeping the society and human needs in focus while delivering learning such that it is application oriented and practical. A lot more group work, original work, application based projects and field training needs to be built into the curriculum even in under graduation liberal arts or natural science courses. We need to build more industry specific institutions and skill based schools within larger institutions such as Institute of Sales, Institute of Project Management etc. that can cater to more real job needs of employers rather than what all-purpose MBA or liberal arts education deliver. Institutions or their associations must carry out

periodic surveys on needs of employers in general and on unique needs that are specific to sectors and then use the same as inputs into curriculum design. Industry involvement into curriculum design has to be ongoing and deeper than what it is today. Continuing education opportunity for in-service people needs to grow and the quality of such courses must be further upgraded so that the mad rush to get higher education without work experience can reduce. Lastly, the entire approach to faculty attraction, training and compensation needs to be modified to attract the best talent into teaching. ...

DANGEROUS DEMOGRAPHICS

Women, Leadership and the
Looming Crisis in Higher Education

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Potential

* There has been a dramatic increase in the number of female students enrolled in South Asia's universities. But the explosion in the number of women is not matched by growth in the number of women in senior leadership roles at universities.

Challenges

* Higher education policy has been characterised by a chronic inconsistency between stated intentions and actual action. There is a gap between rhetoric and platitudes on one hand and practical policy to improve access on the other.

* There is a need for more enabling policies from government and universities. South Asian countries are making positive steps in building gender inclusivity, but policies specific to women leaders in academia are few.

* The cost of the status quo in education is both social and economic. Social, in that women are self-evidently excluded and discriminated against. And economic, in the skills and talent wasted through the exclusion of women from management and decision-making positions.

Solutions

* Fix the woman – this applies to enhancing the women's confidence and self-esteem, building capacity and encouraging women in higher education to be more competitive, assertive and risk-taking

* Fix the organisation – this relates to gender mainstreaming, institutional transformation by introducing gender equality policies, processes and practices, challenging discriminatory structures, gender impact assessments, audits and reviews, introducing work-life balance schemes including flexible working.

* Fixing the knowledge – this is about identifying bias and changing the curriculum (for example, including gender as a category in all disciplines, gender and women's studies).

POTENTIAL

There has been a dramatic increase in the number of female students enrolled in South Asia’s universities

Every year, there are approximately 75m female students in South Asia of tertiary-education age, larger than the population size of a whole United Kingdom. Only about 13m of the 75m females (17.4%) later enrol in public and private universities in South Asia (compared to 17.9m male students in tertiary education).

Rising incomes and growing populations have led to a sharp increase in the demand for higher education in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. This has led to a significant rise in female enrolment rates at undergraduate level, but has yet to translate into proportional representation at postgraduate level or access to management and decision-making positions. In India, the region’s biggest market, 20% of women in higher education age are now enrolled compared with less than 10% a decade ago. And estimated 28m Indians are enrolled

in universities – 12m or 44% are women. At the other end of the spectrum, in Afghanistan, only one in five students are female, even though the number of women enrolled in universities has surged. Across the region the demand for education will continue to increase as fertility and poverty levels drop and the economic returns to education rise. In postgraduate education, numbers of women are equally small: 30,000 women enrolled in PhD programmes in India in 2010-11; in Pakistan, only 6,400 women were enrolled in 2011-12. China has about 120,000 PhD candidates today.

An explosion in the number of women students is not matched by growth in the number of women in senior leadership roles at universities.

The small pool of women then translates to fewer women in higher education research and administration. In India, the University Grants Commission found that less than 3% of Vice-Chancellors in India were women. Women are also less likely to move from lecturer to

Enrolment from primary to tertiary education in South Asia, 2010

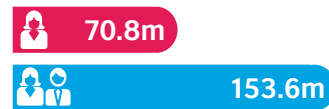
Women (red) Total (women and men) (blue)

Primary-level education

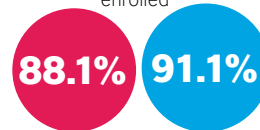
Population



Currently in education



Percentage of students enrolled

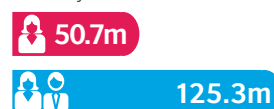


Secondary level education

Population



Currently in education

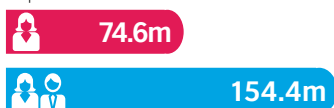


Percentage of students enrolled



Tertiary-level education

Population



Currently in education



Percentage of students enrolled



Note: South Asia refers to the six countries considered for this report: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka Source: UNESCO and EIU estimates

Women academics by position, 2010-11

	India	Nepal	Sri Lanka
Demonstrator/tutor	56.0	NA	NA
Temporary teacher	42.7	NA	NA
Lecturer/assistant professor	38.5	4.9	43.1*
Reader and Associate Professor	31.1	17.7	32.9
Professor and equivalent	25.5	5.9	24.2
Total	37.2	7.3	40.6

**Data is for Lecturer and Assistant Lecturer. No data on Assistant Professor*

Source: All India Survey on Higher Education 2010-11. Report on Higher Education (Nepal), 2010/11, Education Statistics, Sri Lanka

associate professor and professor, and later deans and heads of department. Women are underrepresented in all subjects and roles, especially in middle management and senior leadership positions. There are vast differences across countries, which are at different stages of economic development and differ also in basic indicators such as literacy and general status of women. But one feature that women share is that men dominate institutions of higher education. In all six countries considered for this report, the share of women in positions of authority and responsibility in higher education is shockingly low.

While women take up positions of responsibility, progress is gradual and typically confined to the big cities. A study by India's University Grants Commission shows that women in positions of responsibility are predominantly found in big cities. Physical accessibility of rural or semi-urban educational institutions is a problem across the region and at all levels of education, including higher education.

“Apparently, the cultural socialisation in a patriarchal society is so deep rooted that even the educated are not liberated, unless special efforts are made in this direction. The higher education system is not an exception and it is so even today.”
Prof. Armaity S. Desai, former Chairperson of UGC (India)

CHALLENGES

Higher education policy has been characterized by a chronic inconsistency between stated intentions and actual action.

Official policy in most countries stresses the need to prioritise equal access to higher education; there is an economic case and social justice case for strengthening women's role in higher education. But a gap exists between rhetoric and platitudes on one hand and practical policy to improve access for women on the other. In South Asia, a common intervention has been the promotion of women-only universities. Critics see this policy intervention as merely perpetuating the divide; its proponents say it is an important tool to give access to higher education to women and create the next generation of women leaders.

“Many women who are in senior roles are there “by virtue of having been around for long enough and not because they competed in any way with their male counterparts.”

Female Professor in South Asia

It's a “boy's club”: the politics of promotion

Much like in institutions of higher education in the global north, there are few women at the top. But in South Asia, the “glass ceiling” hangs lower and is described as a “brick wall”, according to one interviewee. Existing patriarchal structures do not necessarily mean that men by default are the “winners” – in fact it is the members of the boy's club” of decision-makers and those connected to it, rather than men in general, who benefit. Nonetheless, the persistence of patriarchal structures keeps women's representation in leadership positions low. Men dominate all decision-making

Other barriers to progress

Postgraduate education coincide with childbearing years

Women's age of marriage often clashes with PhD programmes and women who have children during their postgraduate studies must interrupt their studies.

Internationalisation of HE is difficult for women

“Mobility is considered important, especially in science disciplines, and your career progression may depend on your ability to work overseas,” says Dr. Kate White, director of the Women in Higher Education Management Network.

Women don't aspire to senior positions

A Vice-Chancellor at an Indian university explains that the main motivation for a teaching career is so women can keep busy and contribute to the revenue of the household without the kinds of pressures one might experience in the corporate world: “women seldom enter academia for the right reasons, or, in other words, they should have better reasons”.

“Softer subjects” not deemed rigorous enough

“Research produced in the social sciences is not seen as relevant or important as in the physical sciences. These (disciplines) are seen not to be generating knowledge,” Prof Saeeda Asadullah, former Vice-Chancellor of Fatima Jinnah Women University. Selection committees, often made up of men with degrees from the “hard sciences”, tend to look down on academics with “softer” degrees.

Managerialism in universities and heavy workloads affect senior aspirations

Quantifiable performance measures such as number of classes taught, conferences attended and publications are good in theory. However, in classrooms with more than 80 students, Dr. Veena Poonacha, Professor and Director of the Research Centre for Women's Studies, SNDT Women's University, says these are “good policies but they do not consider the reality of the school system in local universities”.

Selected performance indicators for career advancement

- Lectures, seminars, practicals, contact hours undertaken taken as percentage of lectures allocated
- Use of participatory and innovative teaching-learning methodologies, updating of subjective content, course improvement etc.
- Research papers published in referred and non-referred journals, books, conferences
- Number of sponsored research projects
- Research guidance provided per MPhil and PhD candidate
- Training courses attended

Source: UGC (India)

for a – committees, boards, recruitment panels and the executive. One consequence is that women are often not considered for roles of leadership and responsibility. It is also true that women often do not pursue a career in higher education because of social or family pressures rather than actual barriers. Political affiliations matter more than merit, seniority or academic credentials. “We need greater academic autonomy,” said one gender expert, “We need decentralisation, delinking of universities from government control,” all of which would help reduce politically-linked senior appointments.

Long working hours, responsibilities and accountability make university administration roles unappealing for many women. “It is not the environment that young women aspire to join”
Female Professor in Pakistan

What needs to change

There is a need for more enabling policies from government and universities.

There is a correlation between women managers and leaders, and a woman’s role in society; more patriarchal societies tend to have fewer women at the helm of organisations. South Asian countries are making positive steps in building a more gender-inclusive society, but policies specific to women leaders in academia are few. At the national level, institutionalizing commitments from the Higher Education Commission or University Grants Commission that encourage equity of access in teaching and management positions is critical, as is depoliticising the university system. At an institutional-level, building supportive structures in the form of mentoring programmes, capacity building programmes and ensuring equitable workloads have proven to be effective.

There is a social justice and an economic case for equal access and changing the status quo.

The first is self-evident – women are excluded and discriminated against. The second is obvious and extremely costly – excluding women from management and decision-making positions wastes skills and talent. It is also a wasted opportunity of reforming South Asian countries bureaucratic and politicized public education sectors: academic studies suggest that gender diversity in leadership improves organisational performance, innovation and accountability.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

A gender imbalance in senior roles at universities is not unique to South Asia. Indeed, it is common in other developing countries as well as developed countries. The institutional environment to enable change is often poorly developed. So is the political will. Policymakers may acknowledge the social justice case for more women entering leadership positions in higher education. But if the past is any guide, it may be that social norms, especially attitudes towards women, are more immune to modernity than some believe.

Interviewees differ greatly in their outlook regarding the future of women in university leadership in South Asia. The pessimistic view is that there are by and large no natural forces at play that will bring about change. In this view, most governments neither have the intention nor the ability to implement change. Affirmative action on the composition of selection committees – 50/50 men women – is seen as key to breaking the “glass ceiling”. The optimistic view is that significant progress has been made in recent decades and that it will continue to be made. In this view social change – later marriage, urbanization equitable labour laws and more women role models in higher education – will help bring down barriers.

So what are the solutions? Dr. Louise Morley, Director of the Centre for Higher Education and Equity Research at University of Sussex notes that there are three areas of intervention: fix the women, fix the organization and fix the knowledge.

Fix the woman

This applies to enhancing women’s confidence and self-esteem, building capacity and encouraging women in higher education to be more competitive, assertive and risk-taking

In India, the UGC’s “Capacity Building for Women Managers in Higher Education” scheme supports women’s career planning and development. Women later became more active as leaders in their institutions, were motivated to complete their PhD and three participants reported to later becoming Vice-Chancellors and Heads of Departments.

In other South Asian countries, there is limited evidence of a similar government backed programme. However, at the institution-level, there are examples of supportive structures. At the American International University – Bangladesh, for example, Dr. Carmen Lamagna, the institution’s Vice-Chancellor explains that she finds mentoring extremely important and regularly encourages such one-to-one interaction between junior and senior women professors, as well as between professors and female students.

Fix the organisation

This relates to gender mainstreaming, institutional transformation by introducing gender equality policies, processes and practices, challenging discriminatory structures, gender impact assessments, audits and reviews, introducing work-life balance schemes including flexible working.

Example: Sweden’s IDAS, a women’s network for leadership in higher education, acts as a consultative body for identification, development, advancement and support of women issues in higher education institute. Before IDAS was formed in 2000, only 9% of all universities were headed by women Vice-Chancellors. Today, 43% of Heads of Universities are women.

In South Asia, adequate policies and legislation to ensure participation are lacking. For instance, maternity leave for government staff in India is 180 days on paper but found to vary between 90 and 135 days among the 10% of government employees who are women. In countries across the regions governments have to varying degrees tried to address some of the issues relating to the organization by expanding the role of women’s universities, especially in Pakistan and Bangladesh. In Bangladesh, in particular, interviewees we spoke to were optimistic about the change ahead. While women’s work workforce participation is still low, the fact that the country is now led by a female prime minister, the speaker in parliament is a woman and a woman leads the main opposition party, giving hope

that they will be beacons of change for women's social standing and women in higher education.

Fixing the knowledge

This is about identifying bias and changing the curriculum (for example, including gender as category in all disciplines, gender and women's studies).

Example: South Africa has shown commitment to implement gender equality at all levels of education, including higher education and has put policies and institutions in place to monitor progress. Pakistan, Bangladesh and India have also created women's only universities to create a supportive and safe environment for women

"There is brotherhood that exists between men, but the same type of sisterhood does not exist between women"

Prof Saeeda Asadullah, former Vice-Chancellor, Fatima Jinnah Women University, Pakistan

OPINION

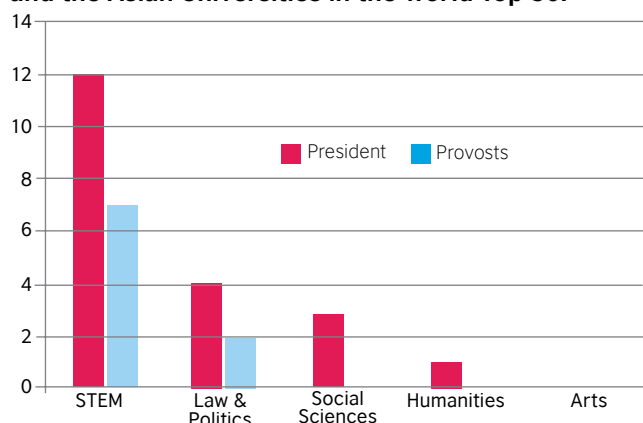
DOUBLE JEOPARDY: EXAMINING THE LOW REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN TOP LEADERSHIP POSITIONS IN HIGHER EDUCATION.

By Jinnie M. Garrett, Dean of the Faculty, Asian University for Women, Bangladesh.

The lack of women in leadership positions in higher education results in part from the same influences that have created the ‘glass ceiling’ in the corporate world. These influences include pipeline issues, life choice constraints and gender-associated preferred traits which all impede women progressing through the many career stages required in preparation for a high intensity/high profile leadership position. However, I am specifically interested in a different factor, which may impact women’s participation in academic governance; the hiring bias towards scholars from certain disciplines in leadership hires.

There are many statistics on the low representation of women in academia. For this study I chose to focus on the leaders of the most highly ranked universities both worldwide and in the United States. Within the World Top 20 (2013-2014), 10% of the presidents and vice chancellors are women and, still more disappointing, none of the Asian universities featured in the world top 50 have a woman leader. Analysis of the subjects in which these leaders had obtained their PhD showed a very uneven distribution of disciplines, with STEM disciplines most highly represented (notably engineering), followed by politics and law, social sciences

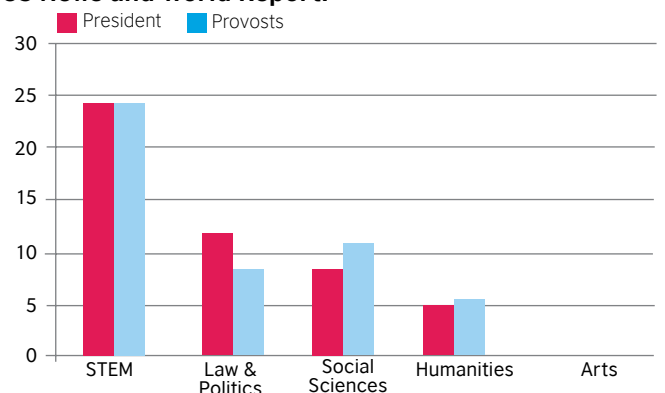
Discipline of the highest degree of the Presidents/Vice Chancellors of Universities ranked in the World Top 20 and the Asian Universities in the World Top 50.



and humanities. There were no leaders from the arts in any of the universities investigated.

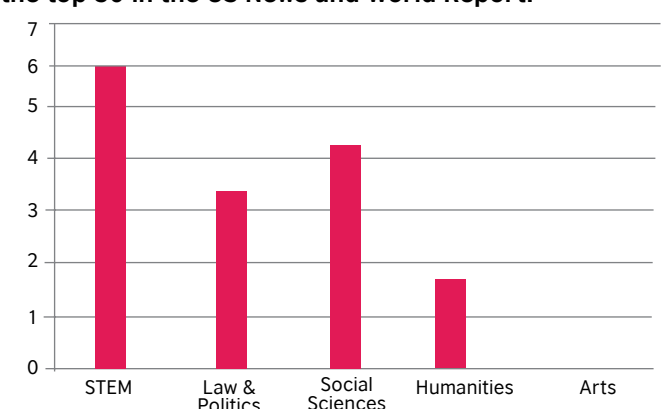
In a larger sample, analysis of the scholarly disciplines of the presidents and provosts (or equivalent) of the research universities listed in the US News & World Report Top 50 gave a very similar result. In this case 17% of the leaders (24% presidents and 10% provosts) are women

Discipline of the highest degree of the Presidents and Provosts of U.S. Universities ranked in the top 50 in the US News and World Report.



Remarkably, the preference for certain disciplines is even more marked than evident in these figures. Within the STEM disciplines, there is a very disproportionate

Discipline of the highest degree of the women Presidents and Provosts of U.S. Universities ranked in the top 50 in the US News and World Report.



number of engineers, the social scientists are mainly economists and the humanists are nearly all philosophers.

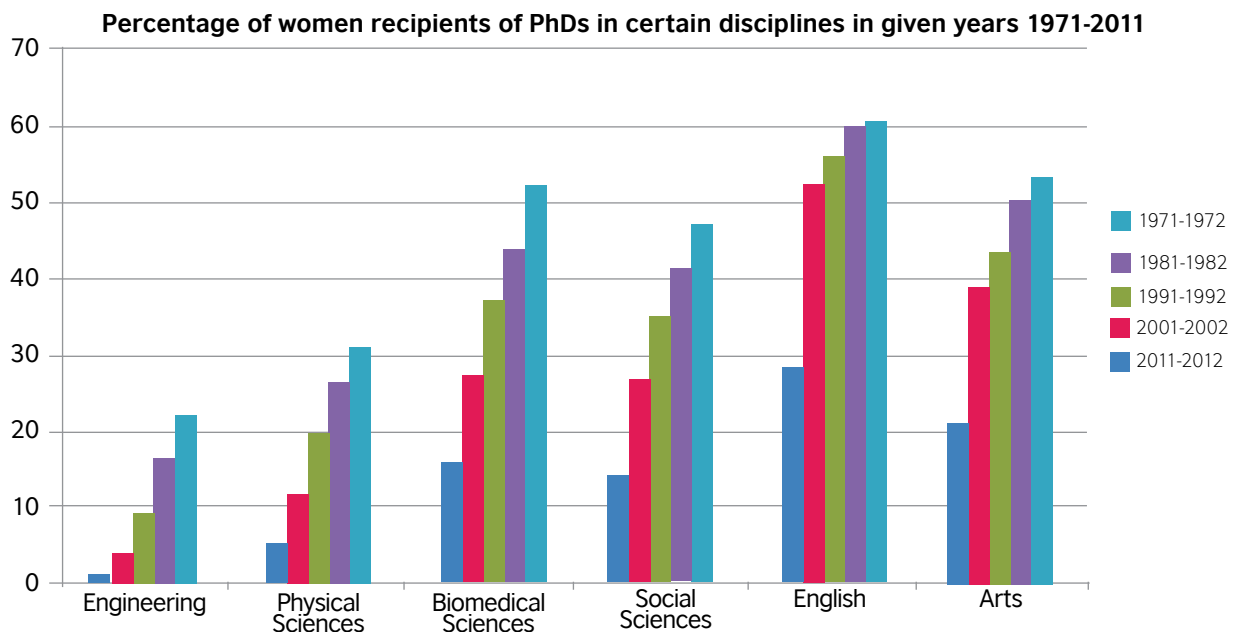
The disciplines of the women who are currently presidents and provosts of US top 50 research universities mirror those of the men. The slightly higher proportion of female administrators with a background in social and political science might be explained by the fact that several women university presidents were high profile politicians who have left office. I believe the higher percentage of women presidents than provosts can also be explained by this hiring practice.

I believe this data contributes to an understanding of why there are so few women in higher education leadership. It is important to remember that the current occupants of leading roles in academia are at the apex of their careers and probably completed their PhDs in the late 70s-early 90s. There was serious gender imbalance in the recipients of PhDs in most disciplines at that time. Of the disciplines shown in Figure 4, only English had an equal number of men and women obtaining PhDs in 1981-82 and 1991-92, and the disciplines most likely to yield presidents and provosts (STEM) had the lowest percentages of women.

While there have been tremendous strides made in the representation of women in all disciplines over the last 50 years, when considering high level academic leadership the data presented here gives serious cause for concern. If the hiring bias towards those from the STEM disciplines, particularly engineering, for academic leaders continues, we are not going to have equitable pools of male and female candidates in the next 50 years. Thus, excluding all other factors that might affect the availability of qualified female candidates for leadership positions, the discipline bias alone will prevent gender parity. Hiring committees would need to start favouring candidates from disciplines with higher percentages of women than men (literature, languages, arts, social psychology etc.) equally to the male-dominated disciplines to get equitable representation of women in leadership roles.

So, that raises what I believe is a fundamental question: Why are scholars from certain fields over-represented amongst academic leadership? What is the cause of this bias?

There are special cases that can be excluded. A few of the top research universities (MIT and CalTech for example) are primarily science and engineering schools and one would expect the leadership to be from a



STEM discipline. However, taking these cases out of the analysis does not make much difference.

Might there be reasons why someone trained in a certain discipline would be particularly well prepared for academic leadership? Relevant skill training might well explain the preponderance of lawyers and economists but, if useful skills are behind the discipline bias, surely having expertise in management or educational psychology is potentially just as relevant? Conversely, what exactly is it about a PhD in engineering that prepares someone for academic leadership?

Finally, is it significant that the fields, from which the highest percentages of academic leaders are drawn, correspond so neatly with those that have the fewest women? Is there really an underlying lack of respect in academia for the disciplines that are preferred by women? This conclusion is supported in the anecdotal data presented in the British Council Report – “Where are the women? Analysing trends in higher education management in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.” They report “selection committees, often made up of men with degrees in the ‘hard sciences’, tend to look down on academics with ‘softer’ degrees” My personal experience as a molecular geneticist, who ventures into applied ethics and gender studies, is that academics in disciplines that seem opaque to the layperson are automatically given more respect than those in disciplines where everyone can potentially have an opinion (and do!). For example, a conservative (male) historian would never dream of questioning the research of an internationally acclaimed aeronautical engineer but might well think he could put forward an opposing viewpoint to an equally well-respected (female) gender studies scholar. Scholars in disciplines like STEM, economics, logic command a respect that is not so readily given to their colleagues in humanities and arts. The fact that this inequity in respect for disciplines aligns with the proportion of women in the discipline areas is highly problematic and directly affects the representation women in academic leadership positions. Women academics that aspire to

leadership positions face a type of ‘double jeopardy’; they are unlikely to succeed in the disciplines in which they would be most likely to become an academic leader and, if they choose, a more gender-friendly discipline, they are highly unlikely to be chosen for academic leadership. There are many issues that must be addressed in order to increase the representation of women in higher education leadership and discipline bias in academia is one that is not receiving sufficient attention at present.

BEST BLOG

WHERE HAVE ALL THE WOMEN GONE IN HE LEADERSHIP?

By Ismail Badat

The numbers

The number of women in higher education is now equal to, and in many South Asian countries surpasses, men at undergraduate level. Yet, this has not translated into senior appointments and leaderships positions within higher education institutions themselves. For example, only three per cent of vice-chancellors in India are women (six of the 13 female vice-chancellors are at women-only institutions). The figure for the UK is only 14%. The number of women working in middle and senior management posts tells a similar story. Furthermore, when women do achieve high office, it is usually in the social sciences, humanities and arts, but not the STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering and mathematics).

Is this a matter of institutional bias (perceived or real) or do women exclude themselves from these positions, leaving the way clear for men and perpetuating the imbalance further? Dr. Lata Chakravarthy (Director International Business School Bangalore) feels that women themselves are to blame, arguing — controversially — that ‘they are often not ready to take on the responsibility’.

Women-only universities

Private higher education has expanded at a rapid pace in response to huge demand and decreasing investment by the state. Women-only universities have been established in a number of South Asian countries as beacons for those learners previously denied opportunities. Examples include Fatima Jinnah Women University (Pakistan) and Asian University for Women (Bangladesh). Although they are attracting dynamic and ambitious leaders into the profession, these institutions are few in number (two in Bangladesh, ten in India, seven in Pakistan). Does bureaucracy, politicisation

and state interference put women off from working in more ‘traditional’ and state-run universities? Is the state sector lagging behind its private counterparts?

Higher education lags behind the private sector

There is also a growing gender disparity when it comes to positions of leadership and influence in higher education contrasted with industry counterparts. While women are beginning to ‘break the glass ceiling’ in all sectors of industry (women occupy 5.0% and 15% of board level positions in India and UK FTSE 100 companies respectively; source: Women in the Board Room – A Global Perspective, Deloitte 2013), those positions in higher education are still seen as the preserve of men.

Are the career options there?

Most academics and managers end up in senior positions more by ‘accident’ than by conscious and deliberate career choice. Studies suggest that more could be done to nurture tomorrow’s talent pool, but especially that of women, by structured professional development, expert mentoring and succession-planning, to make leadership positions more appealing. Bringing transparency into the recruitment and selection processes for senior appointments would also be a positive step.

Creating a fair environment

In the UK, more women than ever are enrolling in higher education, to the extent that the chief executive of UCAS (Universities and Colleges Admissions Service in the UK) remarked that it is men who are now the under-represented group. Despite this, there is just one female vice-chancellor at the elite Russell Group of 24 research-intensive universities. Although India

has recently passed a bill mandating at least one female at board level for public companies, there is no corresponding legislation for universities.

It is clear that it will require both sexes to work together to make progress on this issue. We need policies and interventions, as well as cultural, attitudinal and structural changes to ensure equal opportunities and a more representative leadership in the sector and in society as a whole. South Asia is experiencing a large sector expansion, with plans to build 800 universities over the next decade. It needs to change urgently if it is to avoid perpetuating the present inequalities throughout the next generation of leaders.

CALL FOR ACTION

Our call to action is for a rethink of the Higher Education provision to meet the immediate urgency of the challenges for South Asia: the demographic time bomb is ticking, the pace of social and economic change is challenging the established models, and the new economic order is bringing new economic potential. The consequences of getting it wrong are immense, not just for the nation states, but for the region and globally. Higher education institutions can be viewed as a tool for creating both social and economic impact, tackling some of the entrenched issues facing the region (skills, employability, social mobility, equity) but also issues of national critical importance (climate change, energy, poverty, disease).

Our research and dialogues have clearly identified immediate priority actions which go a long way to addressing the challenge:

1. Building new models of private and public sector partnerships that will invest in new models of delivery and support high quality provision in both Higher Education and Skills
2. A systemic and sustained commitment to access and equity for women in Higher Education supporting researchers, managers and academic leaders
3. Developing new models of Higher Education provision that provides flexible high quality models of delivery rigorously supported by robust quality assurance frameworks
4. Delivering high value skills sector provision tailored to both short term and medium term economic needs that is characterised by quality, flexibility and relevance
5. Building new research networks and supporting business involvement in Higher Education to increase graduate employment and research exchange
6. Supporting a new generation of Faculty members through investment in training, quality assurance, new provision and talent development

By meeting the challenge head on, by being innovative, by responding to the needs of society and industry, South Asia can set the course for the revolution of the higher education sector, fit for purpose in the 21st century and beyond.

