

press release

EDUCATION IN INDIA: SECURING THE DEMOGRAPHIC DIVIDEND

A NEW REPORT BY UKIBC AND GRANT THORNTON

The education and skills sector in India offers significant opportunities in almost all areas: in schools, at the further and higher levels and in the provision of vocational skills. The UK has an internationally recognised competitive advantage in these areas, with excellent colleges and universities, as well as private sector providers all with the experience or capability to form global links. Add to this the shared history and language between the two countries and it seems self-evident that the UK should be India's partner of choice in developing the future of the sector. However, collaborative activity in this field has so far been piecemeal and sporadic, though it is clear that we are seeing the beginning of some very promising incipient linkages being formed.

A number of actors in different parts of the education and skills spectrum have embarked on varying levels of interaction with India. Their work to date is encouraging and bodes well for the future. What has been particularly instructive are the challenges which they have encountered when trying to enter the Indian market or attract students from India. These include, though are not exclusive to, understanding and appreciating different working cultures, the difficulty of identifying suitable partners and unfavourable regulatory issues. Many more believe that there should more of a role for Governments, trade associations and other multiplier organizations to foster greater collaboration in the sector.

UK education and skills providers are often unsure about the best way to navigate the large and complex education arena in India. Organisations such as the UK India Skills Forum are helping UK vocational skills institutions to access the India opportunity and develop the relationships they need to succeed. The challenges, however, are relatively minor when the scale of the opportunity is accounted for; and all right-thinking education providers are committed to long term involvement in the Indian market. A forthcoming UK India Business Council report, Education in India: Securing the Demographic Dividend, will provide practical advice to organizations seeking to do business in India, as well as a snapshot of the sector in India and thoughts on its future development.

partnership in action

The forthcoming report is announced at a time when ties between educational institutions in India and the UK are strengthening. The recent visit of Mr. Kapil Sibal, Human Resource and Development Minister, to the UK marked this development. During his trip, Sibal attended the Learning and Technology World Forum and the 2nd UK-India Education Forum. He also witnessed the signing of five Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) between India and UK higher education institutions which highlighted the benefits of mutual collaboration at a higher level.

further information
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