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On 9th March, the Gandhi Centre at Imperial College Business School hosted an insightful seminar on the opportunities being created for higher education institutions in India.

Organised together with the UK India Business Council, we explored the varied and wide ranging relationships with Indian partners, businesses and educators, and how UK educational institutions can access the ever decreasing window of opportunity within the Indian education sector.

Kevin McCole (UK India Business Council) opened the seminar by summarising the political priorities of the new Indian government and the operating environment in India, detailing the current economic climate in India and what it might mean globally. We looked at a comparison against the Chinese system and economy, noting how changes to visa regulations has dramatically impacted on Indian students coming to study in the UK.

We looked at recent efforts to increase the rankings of India's educational institutions and how we might be able to support these activities and policy decisions. Kevin described to us initiatives such as the Asian Education Hub, a bill designed to attract more students into the Indian education system. If passed, this would permit building of education campuses in India.

The overarching message that Kevin wanted us to remember was that India has fantastic institutions (including IITs and IIMs), and is a very entrepreneurial country. When looking for opportunities for development and collaboration he urged:

“Don’t always look at India’s top institutions, look at other sections of the market – don’t be put off by entrepreneurial ideas”



Next up was the Gandhi Centre’s very own Rahul Bansal (Associate), who took us through a case study of the relationship between Imperial College London and the Hero Group. Rahul began by identifying the ‘Four Mega

Trends’ India is facing currently, including urbanisation, accelerating technological change, challenges of the ageing world, and greater global connections, noting that India has to focus now on being more efficient with the resources available.

An interesting point that Rahul raised was how the way we learn is fundamentally different now, as access to knowledge is so much easier. Technology in India (however restricted in rural areas) is penetrating, especially with the latest boom in blended learning, suggesting that UK institutions may wish to explore becoming ‘hubs’ to encourage various sectors between the UK and India to communicate with each other on how to make blended learning work better.

He went on to describe the current partnership between Imperial College Business School (under the auspices of the Gandhi Centre) and the Hero Group, and how their team is looking at a global vision focusing on an easier flow of knowledge including entrepreneurs in a bid to redefine how education is conducted in India. Imperial College Business School acts as a mentor to the BML Munjal University (BMU), helping to develop the curriculum, training and strengthening faculty members, and participating in teaching various courses at its campus in New Delhi, India.



Anne Kiem (Chartered Association of Business Schools) gave a really engaging and thought provoking talk on the priorities of UK business schools in India. She described the current education climate in India, alongside comparisons in the

Chinese and UK sectors, explaining the current Indian government plan which includes offering 40 million university places to students over the next four years. The long term projection is that by 2020, 40% of university students will be Indian or Chinese.

Anne also touched on rankings, and summarised how, given that UK business schools trump Chinese and Indian business schools in the QS Top 100, there really is no need for the UK to miss out on recruiting more international students.

“There has to be greater collaboration and campuses allowed in India – this year there is opportunity within the UK to enable us to facilitate Business Schools’ engagement”

Our final session featured Pratik Dattani (Director, Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce (FICCI)), who talked on the private sector in India and the trend towards internationalization. Pratik opened with a light-hearted message, quoting lyrics from a famous late-1990s pop song (!), but with the overarching message that we should persevere with our efforts to develop relationships and continue to try to redefine the way education is provided in India.

He touched on the latest visa challenges faced by students, and how this is currently preventing the UK from competing globally as well as it should be.

Describing the ever changing educational landscape in India, Pratik urged that course content be tailored to meet Indian needs, adding that quality of education and the inevitable cost associated with that may not appeal, or be appropriate, to Indian institutions.

To summarise, Pratik reminded us that only a tiny fraction of Indian graduates come from IITs, and so we should get advice and cast our nets much wider when looking to engage.

The session concluded with some great discussion during a Q&A session exploring opportunities within Higher Education, including new and upcoming initiatives, success stories, and cultural considerations to bear in mind.