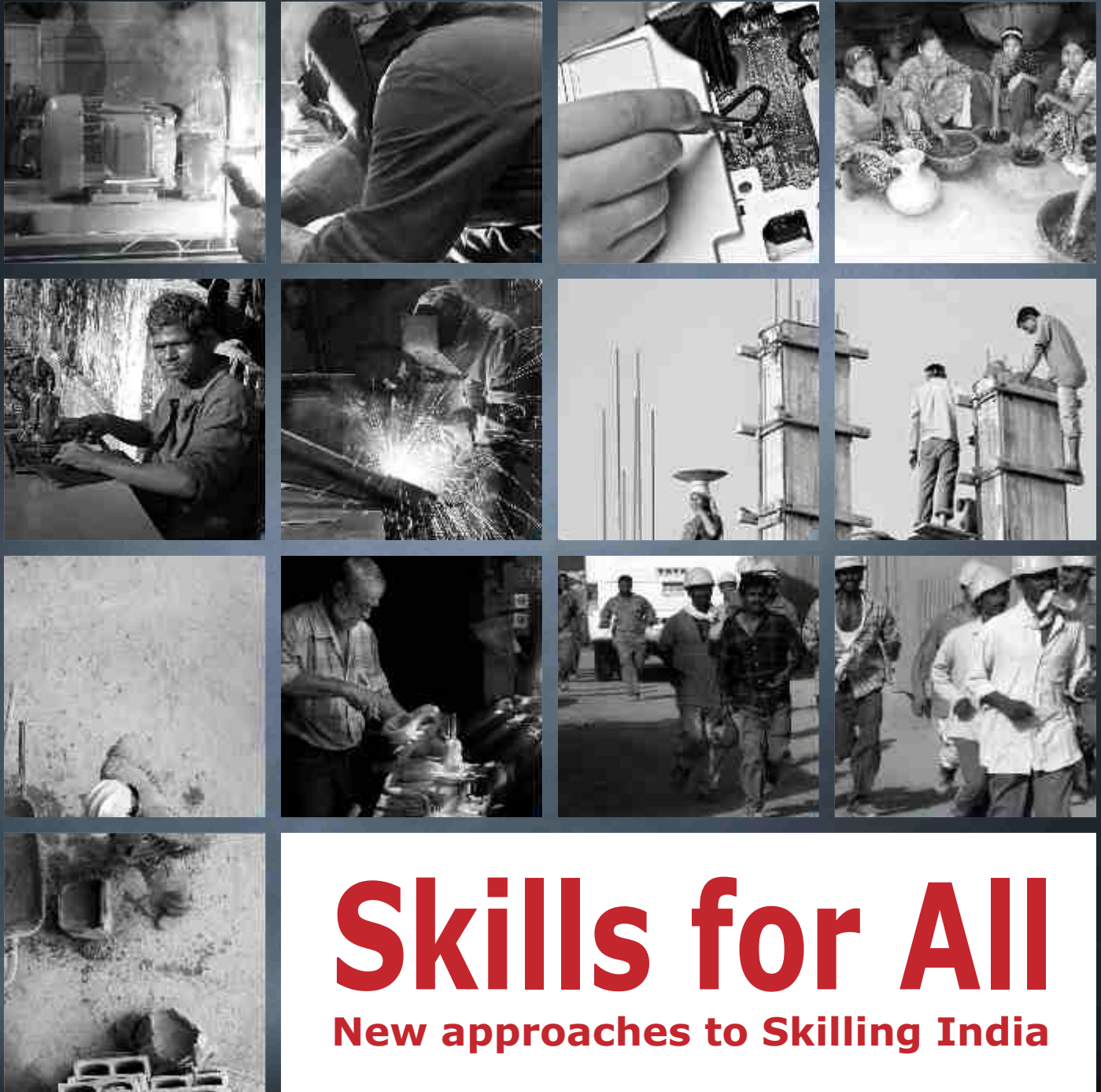


Knowledge Partner

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32<sup>nd</sup> India International Trade Fair  
"Theme: Skilling India"



# Skills for All

New approaches to Skilling India



# Foreword



The economic environment in India is at an unusual phase. It has moved on from the global economic downturn but, is still in a slump. At the same time, India is globally competitive and is being seen as an economy full of opportunities. There are many sectors with good rate of growth, twenty of which will need 200 million trained workers to continue India's economic growth in the coming years. Such a juncture becomes very opportune for skills development in India. The slowdown has given the industry time to devote its machinations on bridging the skills deficit, which, till now, it has not been able to.

Every passing day is multiplying the pressure to skill the unskilled, and up-skill the semi-skilled. The idea to "empower all individuals through improved skills, knowledge, nationally and internationally recognized qualifications to gain access to decent employment and ensure India's competitiveness in the global market", can be achieved through a shared effort of Industry, government, academia et al. **Skills for All** implies that skill development is a concern of everybody in society-- policy makers, employers, trainers, learners, parents-- each has a part to play in delivering the skills agenda.

The Skills development sector is a sector of oddities and extremities. The numbers of challenges are as much as the opportunities; the difference in the numbers of trainers and untrained individuals is as much as the difference in available jobs and available skilled labourers. To arrest some of the challenges India needs to widen the access and increase the demand of Skills. FICCI Skills Development Forum has been keenly working in these areas of concern and this report is a step in that direction.

This report on Skills for All, aims to create a discussion that will evolve bigger and better ideas of overcoming the barriers in this sector. The idea of **Skills for All** in India and the challenges thereof is discussed in detail. It further describes, through case studies and examples, how other countries are overcoming the skills deficit in their people.

I am confident that the information provided in the report will prove extremely relevant to industry, academia, government and all the other stakeholders who are together developing the required skills for a modern, confident India.

**R C M Reddy**

Chairman, FICCI Skills Development Forum

Managing Director and CEO, IL&FS Education and Skills

New approaches to Skilling India  
**Skills for All**







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# Executive Summary

The report Skills for All - New Approaches to Skilling India presents the challenges of skill development in India and new approaches that could be adopted to overcome them.

'Skills for All' as a concept simply means that any person who wants to undergo training is able to. This calls for various initiatives from different stakeholders but essentially means that every person should have the opportunity to access training or education to become more productively engaged in a livelihood of their choice.

Five new approaches have been discussed in the report that could be adopted to achieve "Skills for All" vision. They are,

1. Improving **access to skills**, for the disadvantaged
2. **Recognition of prior learning**
3. Changing **attitude towards skill based education**
4. Structured **career advice and guidance** service
5. Showing **leadership in skills**

There are multiple barriers that the disadvantaged face, especially women and rural communities when accessing skill based education. The prominent ones are limited infrastructure facilities in terms of the number of training institutes in the region, types of training they impart, rigid entry requirements, lack of financial support to learners, and negative viewpoints of society regarding skill based training. Government has formulated a national policy on skill development that lays special emphasis on helping various disadvantaged groups access skill training. New approaches could be adopted to increase access of these groups through more community based initiatives and innovative training methods, more training provisions in rural areas, personal development, life skills training modules for women, and mentoring and work-based training.

There are millions of people in India who have considerable level of skill in a particular area. As they do not have any form of certification testifying to their existing skills they are unable to use this to progress to further training or improved employment. Hence, there is need for a credit and qualifications framework against which individuals' skills could be mapped. This framework should be a built-in element in the National Qualifications Framework currently being developed. There should also be an effort to learn from current localised initiatives in RPL and facilitate replication of these initiatives to spread knowledge and understanding of the concept and practice of RPL.



There is a negative attitude amongst people with regards to skill development such as it results in low paid jobs, it is for people from the lower strata, it is a one way path, and it is for academically weak students. The negative attitude could be changed through targeted marketing campaigns, improving physical infrastructure, strengthening curriculum using industry inputs, attracting private investments, strengthening Vocational Education and Training (VET) in schools, creating a vocation qualifications framework and ensuring quality.

Learners in India are mostly dependent on parents, teachers and other family members for career advice and guidance. These actors might often lack necessary expertise and knowledge to guide learners. A formal system of advice and guidance in India is necessary to form a crucial interface between the learners and the labour market. It would greatly benefit learners by helping them take education and job related decisions that match their competence and interest. It will also help educational and training institutions by arresting drop-outs and help employers by lowering attrition.

The scale and nature of skills challenge in India is unprecedented. There is no proven management technique that will deliver a skilled India. It would need entirely new solutions and approaches, and that requires leadership. Policy makers, employers, trainers, parents and learners, all have to believe that they can show leadership in skills. It is also important for these leaders to send out the right message that skill development is about aspiration, achievement and pride in learning and is not something to embark upon when other choices have failed.



"All education is, in a sense, vocational, vocational for living"  
- John Newsom

# Introduction

Skilling India may be the biggest challenge facing the country today. Training half a billion people by 2022 is almost certainly the most ambitious goal ever set by any country in the field of education and training. Such an ambition cannot be achieved in pockets: it will require the shared endeavour of the whole nation. A shared endeavour implies a shared responsibility: each individual will need to play their part, whether through undergoing skills training themselves or through facilitating others to do so. This is our understanding of what Skills for All means.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) defines skill as "**the ability to carry out the tasks and duties of a given job**"<sup>1</sup>. The development of skills may refer to the productive capacities acquired through all levels of education and training, occurring in formal, non-formal and on-the-job settings, which enable individuals in all areas of the economy to become fully and productively engaged in livelihoods and to have the opportunity to adapt these capacities to meet the changing demands and opportunities of the economy and labour market.<sup>2</sup>

This report takes a look at some of the challenges involved and possible new approaches that could be adopted in ensuring that skills development in India really does mean Skills for All: from ensuring that anyone who wants to undergo training is able to, to examining who should lead the skills development initiative and how. It is not a comprehensive paper, and the issues examined here represent only some of the tasks involved in achieving India's monumental ambitions. But the issues included here have been chosen to reflect what we see as the key aspects of a skills development agenda that includes all Indians.

Part 1 looks at **access to skills**, examining the question of who in India is easily able to undertake skills training. What are the barriers that prevent people accessing skills, and which people in Indian society are particularly at risk from exclusion? A series of case studies show how innovative practice can overcome these barriers and deliver access to skills for all Indian citizens.

In part 2, we look focus a little more deeply on a particular tool that may offer the possibility for increased access to skills: **recognition of prior learning (RPL)**. Our focus on RPL stems from the fact that a large proportion of the 500 million Indian people who will need skill training in the

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<sup>1</sup>ILO (2004): *International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO-88)*. International Labour Office, Geneva.

<sup>2</sup>King, K and Plamer, R. (2007), *Skills Development and Poverty Reduction: A state of the art review*. European Training Foundation, Torino



next decade are already working, and they will have already acquired skills through learning on the job. However, the lack of formal recognition for these skills means they cannot use their previous learning as a way to access further training. As India develops its National Qualifications Framework, the development of a national approach to RPL may also offer the possibility of opening up opportunities for further training to millions of such people, helping to deliver skills for all.

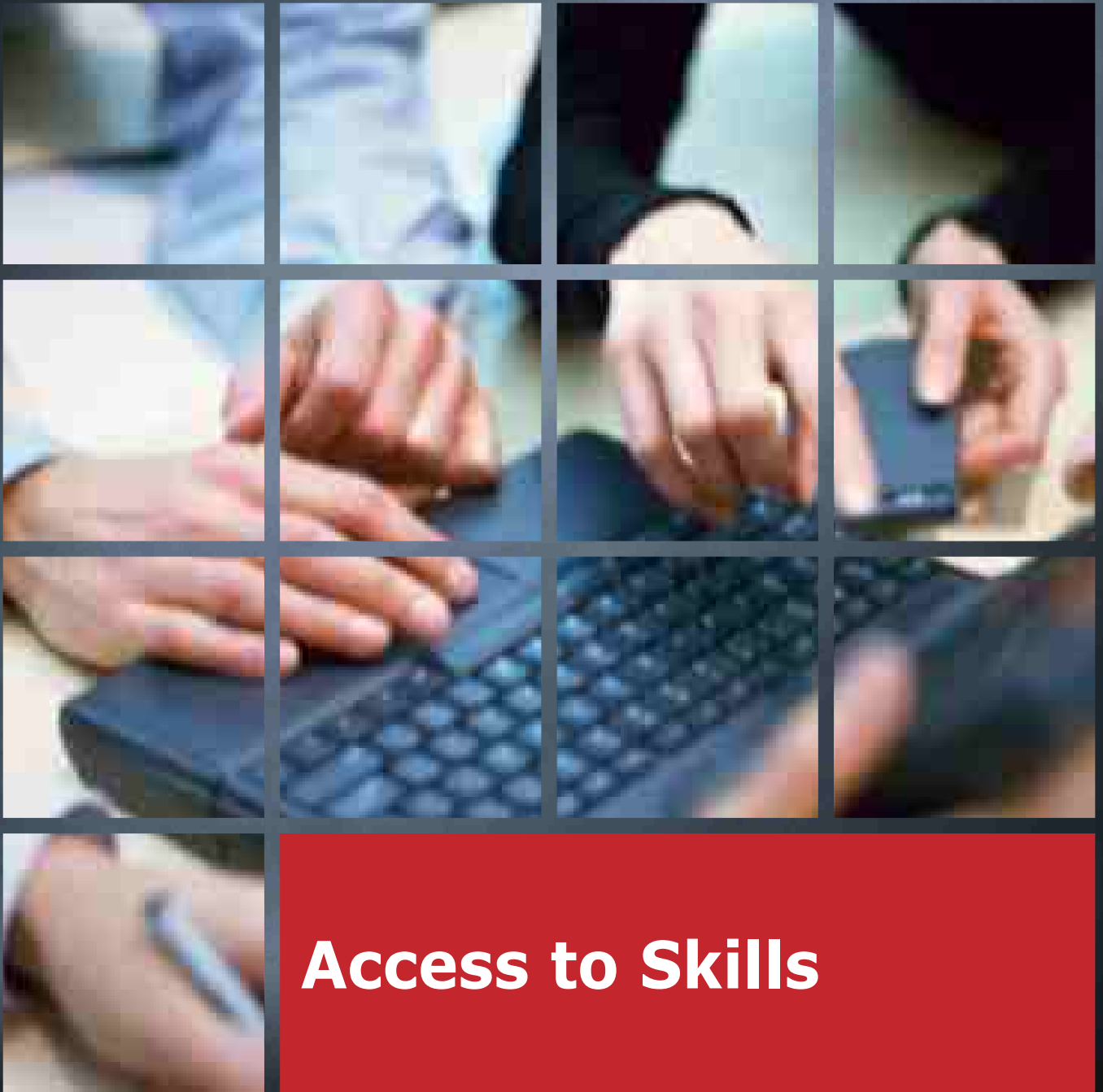
Widening access to skills is necessary, but not sufficient. India faces a similarly large challenge in boosting demand for skills: the country's citizens still need convincing that skills training are an attractive proposition and an aspirational choice. Popular understandings of 'success' can be narrowly defined, which can result in an over-supply of people educated for specific roles and a shortage of many others. Changing **attitudes towards skill based education** is a hugely challenging, but necessary task. In part 3, we examine what is known about Indian perceptions of vocational education and look at how public policy might be able to promote changed attitudes.

Part 4 can be seen as a logical extension of part 3 in that it examines the **advice and guidance** services needed by learners. If India is to not only reach its skills targets but ensure that the skills delivered through training are utilised in the labour market and contribute to the national economy, then it must ensure an efficient transition between training and the workplace. An essential component of this is the provision of dedicated careers advice and guidance to help learners understand the options that are open to them in terms of careers, and the education and training options that can help them to achieve these goals. Part 4 examines the advice and guidance services currently available to Indian learners and uses evidence from elsewhere to explore how these services might develop to support India's skills goals.

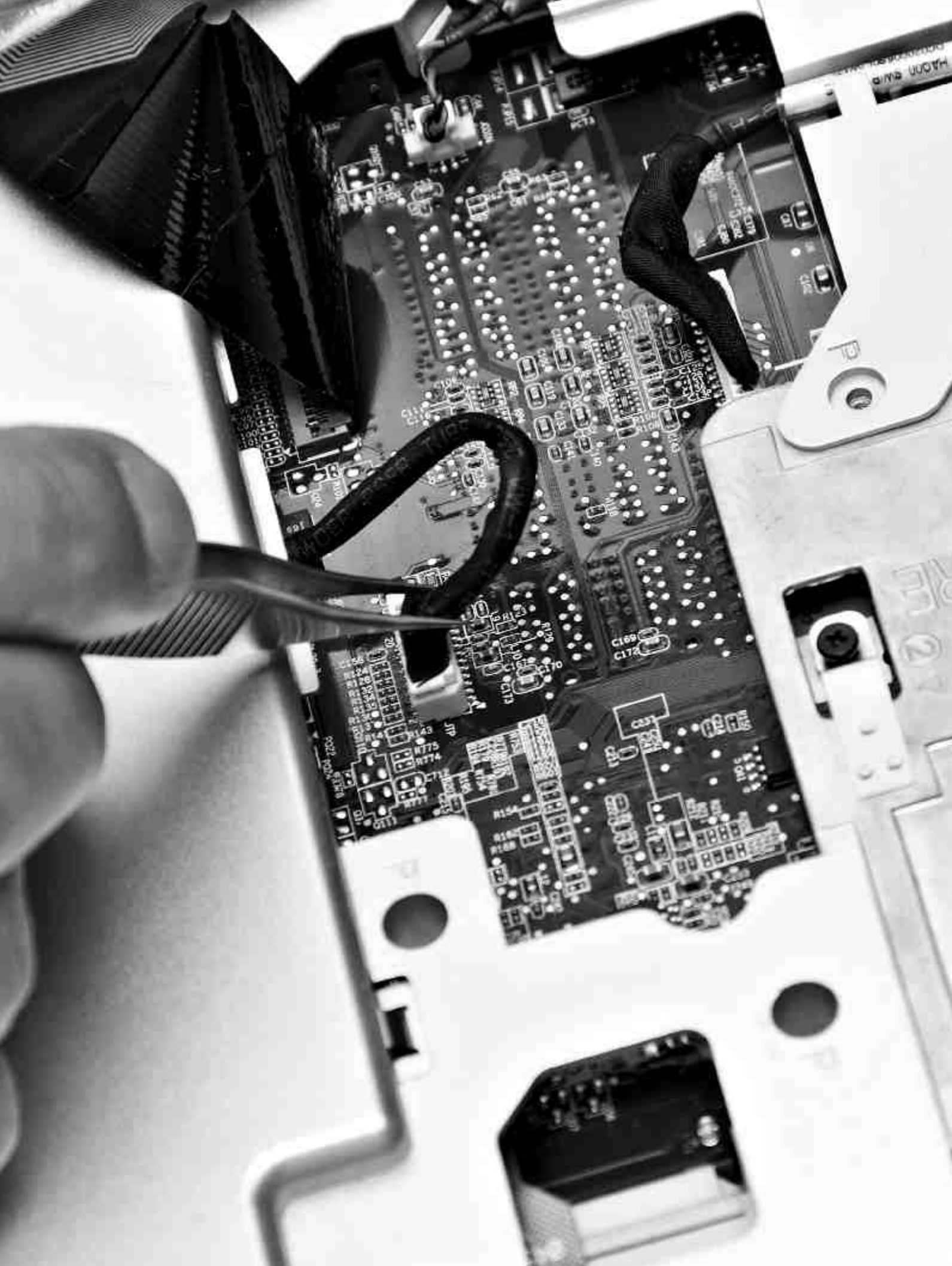
Skills for All, however, means more than changing learners' attitudes and helping them to access training and related services. Skills for All implies that skill development is properly a concern of everybody in society: policy makers, employers, trainers, learners, parents all have a part to play in delivering the skills agenda. This means in turn that India needs leaders from all these groups of people to push through the changes necessary to achieve its ambitious goals. Part 5 examines the question of **leadership in skills**: what leaders do we require? How can they show leadership? What messages should they convey to inspire others to follow? We end with this section, which also function as a call to all participants in the India International Trade Fair to become leaders in skills development and pave the way to India's high-skilled future.



# Chapter I



**Access to Skills**



## 1.1. Introduction

Education is seen as a pathway to employability, better social status and most important of all as a means to making a decent living. With the low levels of access to education and even more so to skills development, the need is for different learning environments to bring about creativity in work and play and transition from knowledge to skills. Australian Qualifications Training Framework defines access as the ability to enter into training. Improving access might involve strategies such as improving physical access to a training venue; ensuring that selection criteria do not discriminate against learners and adapting marketing activities to encourage all learners.<sup>3</sup>

Often, the question of access is raised in the case of disadvantaged groups. In India, women often have limited access to education and to skills because of cultural norms about their role. Other sensitive groups are rural communities and people with disabilities. Because of limited access to vocational education and training, the labour force participation rates of these groups are also low.

Labour Force Participation Rate for different Social Groups (Usual Principal Status Approach)									
Social Group	Rural			Urban			Rural + Urban		
	Male	Female	Both	Male	Female	Both	Male	Female	Both
SC	803	313	572	753	221	505	793	295	559
ST	817	384	610	731	230	490	808	366	597
OBC	791	279	549	751	185	483	781	256	533
General	759	216	504	713	156	451	742	194	485
Overall	788	280	548	733	179	472	774	254	529

Source: Report on Employment and Unemployment survey (2011-12), Ministry of Labour and Employment<sup>4</sup>.

## 1.2. Barriers to access

### 1.2.1. Values and viewpoints

Perhaps the most common misconception about vocational education is that it is meant for learners who are not likely to be part of the formal educational system. It is often a term associated with drop-out students and learners with special needs, thus creating perceptual barriers. Students are often not encouraged to pursue vocational education because for many it is physical labour rather than an intellectual activity. It is not fully understood that that any craft or trade which is imparted by vocational training consists of a mixture of both mental and physical work and application.

<sup>3</sup>[http://www.tac.wa.gov.au/\\_Documents/Documents/Working%20with%20Diversity%20AQTF.pdf](http://www.tac.wa.gov.au/_Documents/Documents/Working%20with%20Diversity%20AQTF.pdf) retrieved on 5 October 2012

<sup>4</sup>[http://labourbureau.nic.in/rep\\_1.pdf](http://labourbureau.nic.in/rep_1.pdf) retrieved on 2 November 2012.



The rigidity of the prevailing caste system also creates barriers. Though the attitudes are changing because of urbanisation and penetration of media, it still deters learners from rural parts in choosing occupation which they perceive to be lower to his/her caste based occupation.

### 1.2.2. Entry requirements

A majority of vocational and technical courses which are offered in India require educational qualifications for entry. For example, in order to get admission into an Industrial Training Institutes (ITI), which is the starting point of a recognised vocational education, the students require a high school degree having 10 years of education. This kind of entry requirement may deter interested learners who do not have the necessary entry level qualifications. Also, there are subject related requirement such as Science and Mathematics for entry into basic courses, which further distances learners from the institution<sup>5</sup>. This may be more acute in the case of women learners who already face traditional barriers when it comes to education. Rural communities too face the same problems because of the lack of access to basic education.

### 1.2.3. Infrastructure

In India the per capita availability of institutions imparting formal education is much higher than those imparting vocational education<sup>6</sup>. Poor presence of vocational institutions means the community is less informed about it and hence their poor utilisation. The location of institutions also affects access, especially for women if such institutions are located in distant towns or villages. Also, poor infrastructure facilities of classrooms, equipment, workshop, and trained teachers etc. within the institution affect the quality of training imparted, affecting learners' future access to jobs.

### 1.2.4. Financial support

Low economic status and limited access to finance, which often is the case in rural areas, does not allow learners to finish their high school and enroll in the vocational courses. For such learners training involves dual costs - the cost of the training itself and the opportunity cost of their lost labour. Because of low income level of the household financial institutions also do not support learners to help them avail vocational training and or any other form of skill development courses.

### 1.2.5. Career opportunities

A number of learners who pursue vocational education find it difficult to get a job in the related field on completion of their training. Although a significant proportion of apprentices find employment, close to two-thirds are not employed in the trade for which they were trained.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup><http://dget.nic.in/miticalicut/welcome.html> retrieved on 5 October 2012.

<sup>6</sup>Manipal City & Guilds (2011). A Global Study to Get India World Ready.

<sup>7</sup>The World Bank (2007), Skill Development in India The vocational education and training system, Washington DC- The World Bank





The main reasons for this appears to be a) a mismatch between the skills attained and those actually in demand and b) a mismatch between the skills taught and the graduates' own labour market objectives<sup>8</sup>.

### 1.3. Response to barriers

Government has shown its strong commitment towards skilling people by allocating sizable public expenditure, formulating a National Policy on Skill Development in 2009, and creating enabling institutions such as Prime Minister's National Council on Skill Development and National Skill Development Corporation. But, to achieve the goal of skilling 500 million people by 2022 it is important that the enabling institutions continue focusing on the principles laid down in the policy, especially those related to skilling the disadvantaged. With regards to the disadvantaged communities the national policy lays down the following objective,

*Equity consideration - adequate participation of women, disabled persons and disadvantaged groups including economically backward & minorities - enhancing their access to training; improving employability and increasing employment opportunities<sup>9</sup>.*

Enhancing the employability of the deprived and rural poor, in particular women, is a prerequisite for mitigating the risk of further poverty and more severe marginalization<sup>10</sup>. To address the barriers which stop learners from disadvantaged groups taking up vocational education, the following measures may be adopted from a policy perspective:

- Introducing special mechanisms in the delivery of training to increase participation by women, including mobile training units, extension schemes, and in-plant training;
- Monitoring progress in increasing the participation and integration of women in training and employment and holding training institutions accountable for equitable intake of women;
- Expanding significantly the training provision for rural poor, young women and men and vulnerable groups in poor rural areas. This could be achieved through greater equitable integration into existing institutions, structures and facilities;
- Promoting training in non-traditional fields for women through the establishment of specific training programmes and pilot support schemes; training programmes for women and rural poor could include personal development and life skills training modules and literacy training;
- Increasing the pool of women trainers and provide certification for training;

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<sup>8</sup>The World Bank (2007), *Ibid*

<sup>9</sup>[http://planningcommission.nic.in/reports/genrep/skilldev/rep\\_skilldev7.pdf](http://planningcommission.nic.in/reports/genrep/skilldev/rep_skilldev7.pdf) retrieved on 8 October 2012.

<sup>10</sup>Hartl, M (2009), *Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and skills development for poverty reduction- do rural women benefit?*, IFAD



- Designing targeted interventions to address vulnerable groups such as people with disabilities, to increase their economic empowerment;
- Combining income skills training with provision of technical inputs, credit and supplies, careful selection of students that are capable of using the supplies and providing continuous support and mentoring schemes;
- Introducing more work-based learning and linking trainees with mentors/masters to gain experience of a specific trade; integrating business, self-employment and entrepreneurial concepts into training activities, especially in follow-up phases, and search for trainers with relevant backgrounds and familiarity with both the formal and informal sector.

### ***Case Study: The Barefoot College - Skilling and Empowering rural communities***

The Barefoot College through its programmes such as Solar Energy, Water, Education, Health Care, Rural Handicrafts, People's Action, Communication, Women's Empowerment and Wasteland Development, empowers and educates illiterate villagers and provides them with the skills necessary to be a productive part of society. Since all programmes and its initiatives are planned, managed and implemented by members of the rural community, each one acts as a source of employment to some degree.

Barefoot was established in 1972 by Bunker Roy to address problems of the rural population and make them self-sufficient. The original Barefoot College is located in Tilonia Gram Panchayat of Kishangarh Block in Ajmer District of Rajasthan but the model has now spread to over 80 other locations across India and more.

Most members of the organisation have traditionally been farmers, leather craftsmen, carpenters, potters, barbers, cobblers, cleaners, blacksmiths, musicians, traders, tailors or butchers, whose vocational trainers have been their fathers and forefathers. The Barefoot College allows illiterate and unemployed men and women to train, learn, and grow into social workers, who may not be paper qualified but are never the less 'Barefoot Professionals'.

For more information, please visit: <http://www.barefootcollege.org>

### ***Case Study: SEWA - Using Collective Power to Change***

The Self-Employed Women's Organization (SEWA) is a trade union registered in 1972, based in Ahmedabad and made up of poor, self-employed women workers who earn a living through their own labour or small businesses. As such, they do not have salaried employment and thus do not enjoy the welfare benefits that those in the salaried sector do. This sector represents 94% of working women in India. SEWA's two stated goals are full employment and self-reliance for its members.

In pursuit of these goals, SEWA organizes these women for full employment and reliance, including work security, income security, food security, and social security. The women are organized into cooperatives and federations to help and work as artisans, milk vendors, vegetable vendors, gum collectors, quarry workers, paper pickers, salt producers, small, marginal, and landless agrarian workers, and health workers.

Using the power of collectives, SEWA empowers its members by providing training to help manage their own finances and diversify their productive activity by branching out to non-farm enterprises. Benefits from the training provided to these collectives include higher rates of employment, increased knowledge and skill levels, increased vocational aspirations, and greater employment in non-traditional fields.

For more information visit [www.sewa.org/](http://www.sewa.org/)

### ***Case Study: SEWA - Saksham Initiative of Gitanjali Gems – Skills for People with Disabilities***

The Saksham initiative of Gitanjali Group is focused on empowerment of People with Disabilities (PWD's) through training and employment. The goal of the project is to create conditions for their rehabilitation and integration into society. Gems and jewellery in one of the industries where there is a huge potential for employment of the underprivileged PWD due to the specific nature of the processes. This initiative in partnership with Centre for PWD Livelihoods (CPDL), a public-private initiative between Youth4Jobs and Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty, Govt. of Andhra Pradesh, has emerged as a model for other companies to follow in skill development.

A special Saksham training centre operates at the Rajiv Gems Park, Learners are mobilised from different districts of the state by special community teams who are disabled themselves, identified and trained by CPDL, which has partnered with Gitanjali to identify, source and counsel learners. A six month training course is provided at a training centre set up by Gitanjali Gems at their manufacturing plant in Hyderabad. Two



trainers are present who are sensitive towards different forms of disabilities and the capability of the learners to perform different processes in jewellery design and manufacturing. All participants are provided with free board and lodging. 280 young people have been trained and placed so far in a 1000 total workforce. The plan is to step this number to 1000 as their workforce expands.

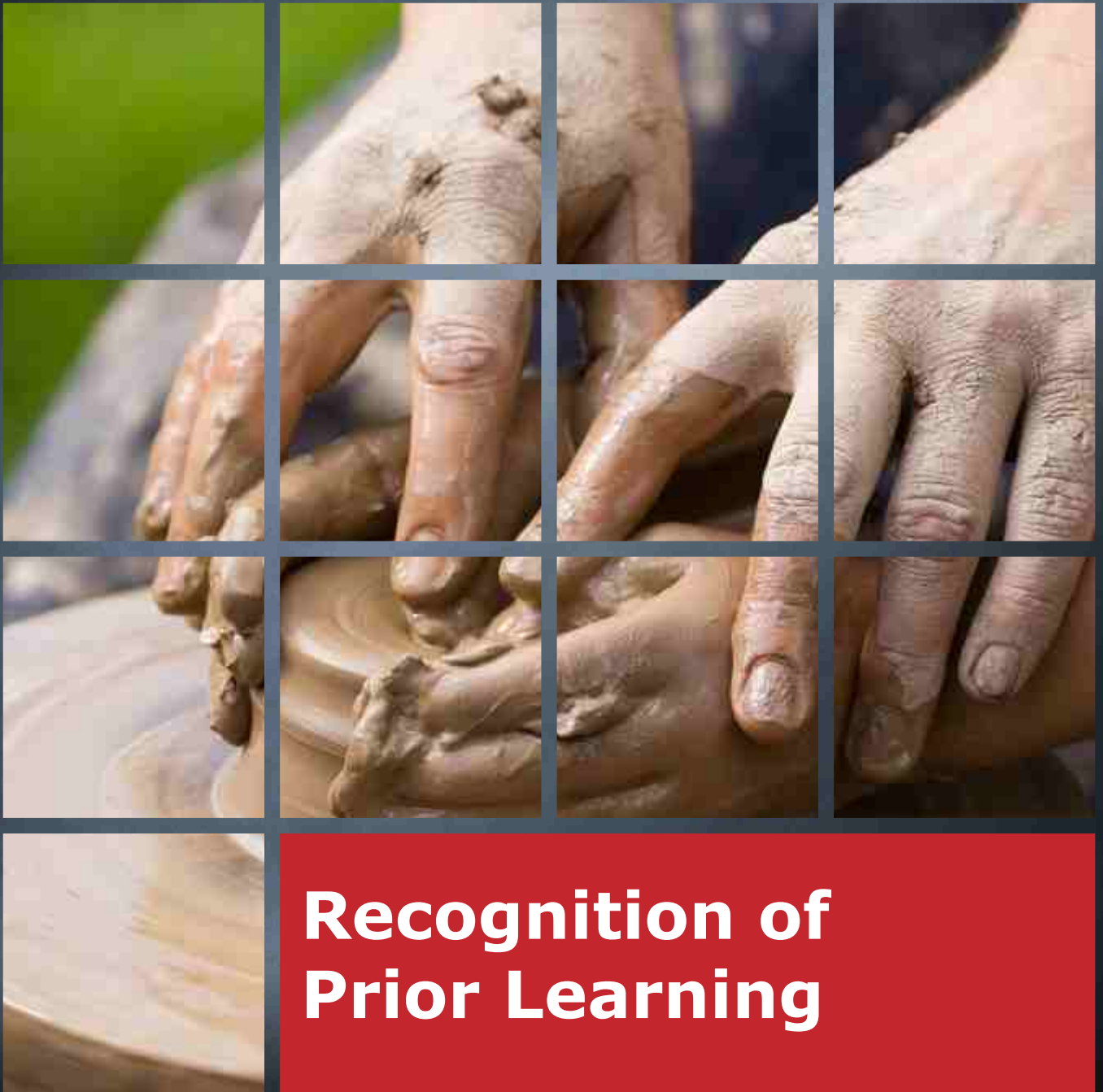
The benefits of the Saksham initiative have been many, the main benefits are listed below:

- Increased productivity and lower attrition rates for Gitanjali Gems who have come to see hiring people with disabilities as a sound business decision as well as a CSR initiative
- Increased self-esteem and confidence among participants especially women who were previously seen as burdens to their families
- Removing the prevalent social stigma against people with disabilities
- Creation of a positive work place environment which is sensitised to the needs and aspirations of people with disabilities

In 2010, The Saksham initiative was awarded the prestigious NCPEDP- Shell Helen Keller Award, 2010 under Category C meant for Companies/Organizations/Institutions who through their policies and practices demonstrate their belief in equal rights and gainful employment for people with disabilities.

For more information visit <http://www.gitanjaligroup.com/csr/saksham.html>

# Chapter II



**Recognition of  
Prior Learning**





Promoting skills for all means ensuring that barriers to accessing skills that may be experienced by some in society can be overcome. One of the biggest barriers in India is the fact that for millions of people, low previous levels of educational attainment mean they are unable to get a foothold on the first rung of the skills ladder.

This occurs for three main reasons:

- Low educational achievement is often linked with poor literacy and numeracy, meaning people often lack the basic skills needed to undertake learning
- Even if people with low levels of educational attainment are in work, they are less likely to have opportunities for training: research shows that the likelihood of involvement in lifelong learning increases as an individual attains higher level qualifications<sup>11</sup>.
- Many educational opportunities open to adults may require a minimum level of qualification in order to be eligible for entry

Improving access to learning for people with low previous attainment thus needs to address three issues: training in literacy and numeracy, changing attitudes towards the value of providing training to those with lower levels of attainment, and facilitation of the gaining of entry-level qualifications in order to promote further training and education. It is for the latter of these three that the recognition of prior learning, or RPL, can be a powerful tool.

## 2.1. India: awash with skills?

The vast majority of the Indian population has never achieved any formal recognition of educational achievement. They also overwhelmingly work in the informal sector: over 90% of employment in the country sits outside of systems of taxation or social security. The people doing these jobs lack any kind of employment or job security, and can rarely expect access to any kind of formal training.

Yet in most cases they are not unskilled. From the entrepreneurial skills of the street hawker to the construction site worker's knowledge of tools and their application, India is awash with skills. The problem is that, since they have never been formally assessed, it is impossible to say with certainty what level of skills an individual has; and since they have been acquired piecemeal and on-the-job there may be significant gaps in an individual's skills and knowledge. What this means is that, while an individual may have a considerable level of skill in a particular

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<sup>11</sup>See, for instance, Riddell, S., L. Ahlgren and E. Weedon (2009). *Equity and lifelong learning: lessons from workplace learning in Scottish SMEs*. *International Journal of Lifelong Education* 28:6 777-795



area, they are unable to use this to progress to further training or improved employment, as they do not have any form of evidence or certification testifying to their achievements.

RPL is a tool that can assist such individuals to build on what they have already attained in order to develop still further. It is essentially a form of assessment, but one aimed at people who do not come to assessment after a period of formal training. Using methods specific to this target population, RPL can identify the skills they have and the gaps in their skill sets; and it can give them formal recognition of the former which they can use to access further training.

RPL, as implemented in other countries, can be seen to have five main potential benefits:

- It can be seen as a way to achieve a fairer and more inclusive skills system, by bringing those who may have been excluded from traditional learning back into learning pathways and better jobs.
- It can promote choice and flexibility in training and education systems by offering alternative routes to qualifications and back into training.
- It is potentially much more efficient; it allows for the maximum utilisation of existing human resources by allowing current skill sets to be codified and to serve as a step to further development.
- It promotes a positive learning culture and a social view of learning as an attainable and positive goal for every individual.
- In workplaces, it may offer an effective way for employers both to understand the skill levels existing in their own organisation and to demonstrate investment in staff<sup>12</sup>.

## 2.2. The importance of a qualifications framework

In the Indian context, the main challenge around introducing RPL is the lack of an established credit or qualifications framework. Recognition of learning can only be meaningful if it is translated into terms that are comprehensible to employers and/or education providers; RPL thus requires a framework of credit, qualifications or occupational standards against which individuals' skills can be mapped<sup>13</sup>. India is in the process of developing such a framework, but it will be some time before this has become fully embedded in the system and achieved wide recognition among training providers and employers.

<sup>12</sup>Sims, C. (2010). *Recognition of Prior Learning*. City & Guilds Centre for Skills Development Briefing Note series #27

<sup>13</sup>The Learning Experience Trust (2000). *Mapping APEL: Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning in English Higher Education*



In the meantime, experiments in RPL outside of a framework are already underway in India. Without a framework, such experiments are by nature localised, as they need to work directly with local employers or training institutions to map individuals' skills directly to entry requirements. This can be seen as similar to the common practice among educational institutions of granting individual exemptions from study based on prior experience, on a case-by-case basis<sup>14</sup>. In India, however, such experiments are exploring whether RPL initiatives can prefigure the development of a framework by working with employers to effectively establish local standards<sup>15</sup>. Further work is needed to establish the potential of such initiatives to scale up and offer opportunities to larger numbers of workers, and to develop protocols for RPL which could then be applied within the future qualifications framework.

## 2.3. Other challenges in introducing RPL

Where RPL has been introduced, other significant challenges have emerged. These include<sup>16</sup>:

- **Lack of demand from learners:** In practice, learners have often been found to prefer training courses even when they are eligible for RPL, because they value the learning process and the social interactions that accompany it.
- **Lack of awareness and low esteem:** Without a strong marketing effort, learners and practitioners often lack awareness of the option to pursue RPL. Where awareness exists, RPL has often struggled with an image problem whereby it is seen as an 'easy option' and not valued by stakeholders.
- **Complex processes:** RPL tends to be beset by heavy bureaucracy. In some cases, this has meant that pursuing RPL requires precisely those communication skills, usually gained through academic education that those who stand most to benefit from RPL often lack.
- **Inadequate support for evidence gathering:** The need for quality assurance has sometimes led to onerous requirements for collecting evidence in support of an application for RPL; without adequate support many candidates may struggle and become discouraged.
- **Confusing language:** RPL can become filled alienating jargon. This may be exacerbated by language difficulties.

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<sup>14</sup>Sims, C. (2010). *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup>One such experiment is that being carried out by LabourNet, a Bangalore-based NGO, with informal workers in the construction sector. Manipal-City & Guilds is working with JPAG to evaluate this initiative and the report will be available in the Autumn of 2012.

<sup>16</sup>Sims, C. (2010). *Ibid.*



## 2.4. Requirements for RPL success

RPL is a relatively new concept and is widely used in only a few countries. Much work remains to be done to evaluate existing initiatives and understand what RPL requires in order to be successful. However, the following factors may be important<sup>17</sup>:

- Buy-in from stakeholders and efforts to raise awareness among employers, practitioners and candidates
- Rigorous assessment processes to ensure quality
- Minimal bureaucracy and sources of support to help practitioners and candidates through the process
- Clear, jargon-free information
- Sufficient resources to administer the system, and investment in the skills of practitioners and assessors to ensure they are competent to deliver RPL
- Recognition of, and investment in, the skills needed by applicants to be able to access the RPL process. This is particularly relevant where applicants have had bad experiences of education or have low levels of literacy and numeracy.
- Autonomy for training providers to develop their own system according to target group, needs and resources.

## 2.5. Challenges for India and next steps

Like many developing countries, India has good reason to be interested in pursuing RPL. Its large informal sector workforce means the country can be assumed to have a higher proportion of workers with unrecognised skills than most, while the equity benefits of RPL chimes with government goals to reduce poverty and exclusion (as is also the case in South Africa, where tackling inequality is a central goal of RPL<sup>18</sup>). In the Indian context, there are three key challenges around its introduction:

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<sup>17</sup>Sims, C. (2010). *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup>South African Qualifications Authority (2002). *The Recognition of Prior Learning in the context of the South African National Qualifications Framework*. Pretoria: SAQA policy document



**1. Infrastructure:** This includes both the educational infrastructure required to carry out assessments of any nature, including RPL, and the policy infrastructure needed to support it (principally, a framework). However, this puts India in the position of being able to introduce RPL gradually and as an integral part of wider initiatives, thus avoiding mistakes that have been made elsewhere: in Australia, for instance, it has been argued that over-hasty introduction of RPL is partly to blame for the low take-up of the option, confusion around its purpose and scepticism about its value<sup>19</sup>.

**2. Reaching the most excluded:** In principle, RPL offers the most opportunity to the marginalised and poor who have had limited or no formal education. In India, the large majority of this group works in the informal economy (if at all), so RPL cannot be offered through employers. There are huge challenges around identifying where skills exist, communicating to potential candidates the concept and value of RPL, and administering the process, exacerbated by often low levels of literacy and numeracy. There are also significant costs involved in administering RPL which must be met if it is to be used for the poorest in India.

**3. Linking to further training:** If RPL is seen as a tool for capacity building, then it should arguably be principally seen as a way to bring individuals into further education and training. However, evidence from RPL initiatives in developing countries is that outcomes tend to be linked to occupational standards rather than curricular structures, leading to a lack of connectivity with further education and a mindset that receipt of a certificate of recognition is an end rather than a means to further development. This is a real risk for India.

It should be stressed that RPL can only be one part of a wider solution to the Indian skills challenge. It is simply a method of assessment that may be of particular interest to India, and that could be employed as part of a broad skills strategy. By itself, RPL cannot deliver improved prospects in terms of training or employment for large numbers of Indians: for that, training pathways must be developed and employers must support skills development by offering improved pay and career structures for skilled people. Care must be taken, therefore, to ensure that RPL is not seen as an easy solution, but that it is treated as simply one potentially valuable piece of a much more holistic approach to skills development.

That said, India is in a position to use the next few years to explore the concept of RPL, trial different models, and develop the foundations of a future RPL system. This could include:

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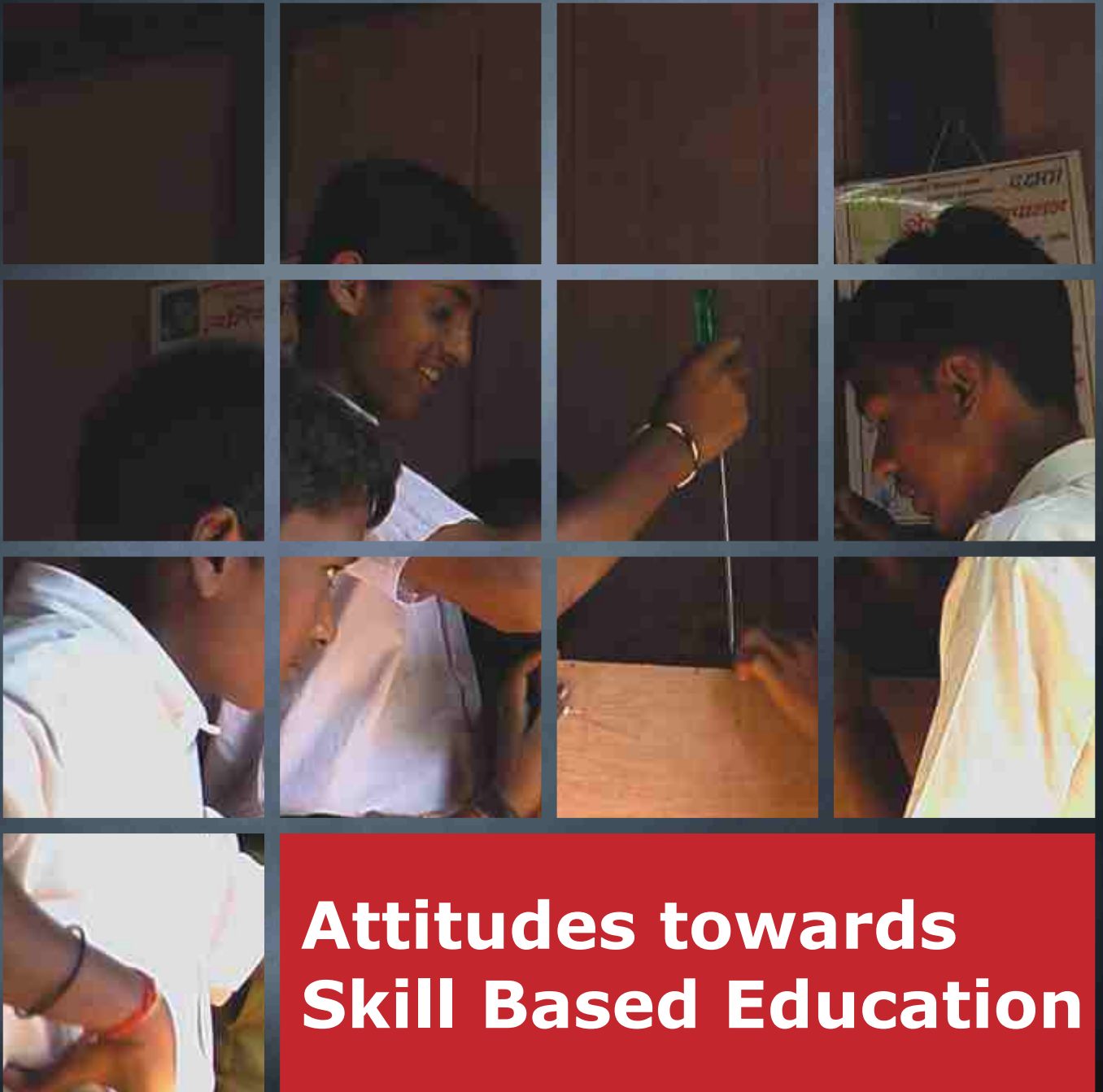
<sup>19</sup>Smith, H. (2008). *RPL in Australian Vocational Education and Training: what do we know (about it)?* Presentation to the 11th Australian VET Research Association Conference, Adelaide.



- Learning from current localised initiatives in RPL to better understand the challenges on the ground
- Facilitating replication of these initiatives elsewhere in India to spread knowledge and understanding of the concept and practice of RPL
- Building in RPL processes as a key element of the implementation of the developing National Qualifications Framework
- Investing in infrastructure for assessment and training for the implementation of RPL
- Developing innovative ways of funding RPL, bringing in public and private sources
- Working with training providers to increase understanding of RPL and develop routes into further training via RPL.



# Chapter III



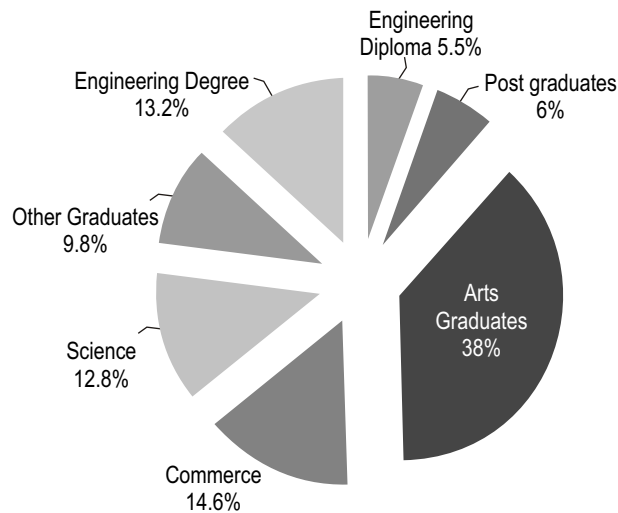
## **Attitudes towards Skill Based Education**



### 3.1. Why skill based education is not a choice?

Skill based courses are in low demand in India. Learners, parents and community largely prefer educational qualification in academic subjects such as arts, science and commerce or its applied streams such as law, medicine, management, accountancy and engineering. There is relatively less preference for vocational streams such as carpentry, blacksmithing, automobile repairing, air-condition repairing etc...This is reflected in number of students who complete their education and enter the job market year. The current year estimates by NASSCOM suggests that 66% of the graduates would be from academic subjects - arts, science and commerce together<sup>20</sup>.

India's talent pool FY 2012 Estimates-4.4 million



Source: NASSCOM Website

Following are some of the general perceptions of people regarding skill based education and training.

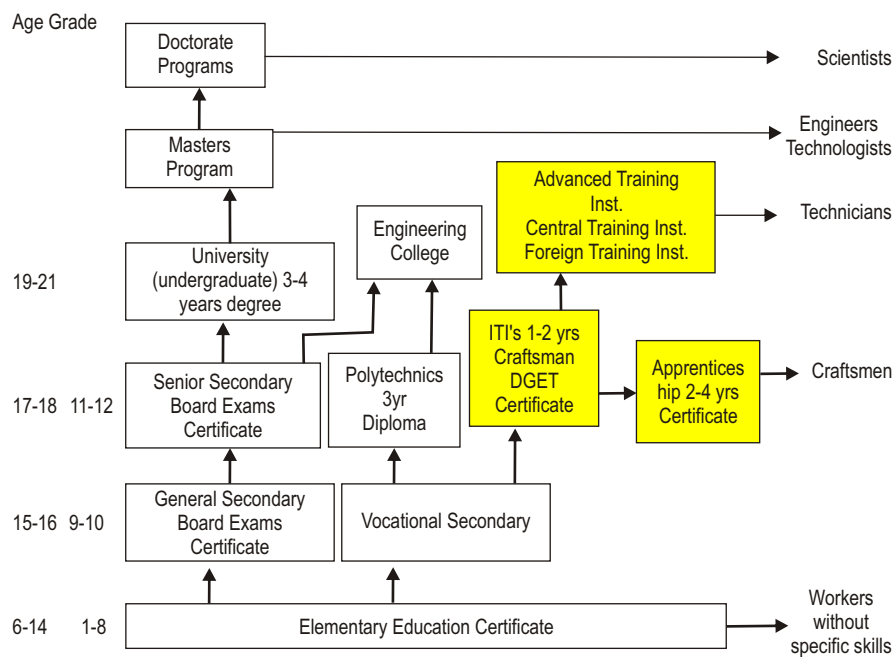
- **Results in low paid jobs** - Learners and parents think that skill based, especially manual skill based jobs are low-paid, and hence the overall return to their educational investment is low.
- **For academically weak students** - There is a perception that expertise required for a skill based job is pretty basic; hence it is only for academically weak students and school dropouts.

<sup>20</sup><http://www.nasscom.in/knowledge-professionals> retrieved on 10 October 2012.



- **For people in the lower strata** - The society attaches aspirational value to managerial and desk-based jobs, which in the caste system have been the occupation of the higher castes. Skill based occupation are not chosen as they deny upward mobility in the social hierarchy to the lower castes. However, rapid economic growth and expansion of middle class are slowly loosening the association between caste and occupation<sup>21</sup>.
- **One way path** - Owing to the lack of qualifications framework in India that establishes equivalence of degrees in vocational and academic sectors for lateral and vertical mobility<sup>22</sup>, the vocational education pathway is considered one-way by learners. Hence, it is limiting in terms of their career development.

### Academic, Technical and Vocational Parallel Training Structure/System in India



Source: Skill Development in India: The Vocational Education and Training System<sup>23</sup>

<sup>21</sup><http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/article2913662.ece> retrieved on 8 October 2012

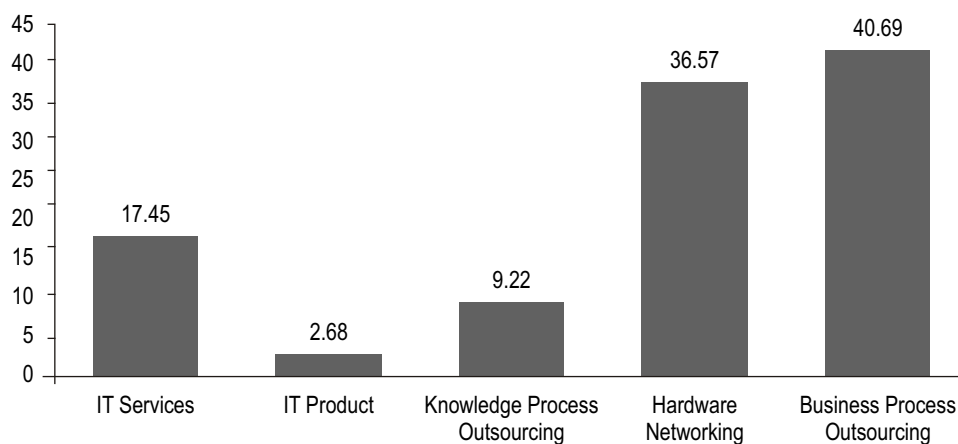
<sup>22</sup>Vertical mobility refers to attainment of qualifications such as bachelors, masters or a doctorate level degree whereas horizontal mobility refers to the ability to shift between academic and vocational courses at any point of the educational ladder.

<sup>23</sup>World Bank (2006). Skill Development in India: The Vocational Education and Training System - Draft. South Asia Region: World Bank Publications.

## 3.2. Employability of graduates from academic streams

Though there is a strong preference for achieving higher qualifications such as a bachelor and a master degree, the employability level of Indian graduates is not very high. A study conducted across 6 cities in India found only 23% of MBA students as employable, when assessed for good abilities and communication skills<sup>24</sup>. Similarly, a study of engineering graduates found employability percentage varying from less than 3% to about 41%<sup>25</sup> across different sectors. This is not only because the subjects are largely theoretical but also because curriculum has not been designed in consultation of the industries. It is also sometimes true that many graduates who get employed learn more on-the-job than in the classroom. This means increased training cost for employers and longer gestation period for graduates before they become productive for the organisation.

**Employability of engineering graduates across sectors in percentage**



Source: National Employability Report Engineering Graduates Annual Report 2011<sup>26</sup>

## 3.3. Changing attitudes and strengthening skill based education

Skill based courses focus on imparting practical training to the learners. The apprenticeship and concurrent training that is usually a part of such curriculum has provision for training in the institutional context. This helps learners hone what they have learnt in the classroom making them more employable. This view is shared by the employers in both developed and

<sup>24</sup> MT (2011). *MBA Talent Pool Report Key Findings*. Bangalore: Merit Trac Publications.

<sup>25</sup> AM (2011). *National Employability Report Engineering Graduates Annual Report 2011*. Gurgaon: Aspiring Minds Publications.

<sup>26</sup> AM (2011). *Ibid*.



developing countries. A study conducted in 2008 across nine different countries - Australia, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Hungary, India, Malaysia, South Africa and the UK reported that 80% of employers believe that vocational education and training gets employees ready for the workplace<sup>27</sup>. Also, in a recent study on apprenticeship conducted in the UK in 2011 found that 89% of the employers view apprentices as the key to the future success of their business and 52% of those companies that already recruit apprentices believe that they offer greater value than hiring university graduates<sup>28</sup>.

There is a long way to go before skill based career is accepted as viable option by the learners, the parents and the community. Policy makers have a particularly important role to play in this regard. Their effort should not be to neglect academic route to a career, rather bring vocational route which has been lagging behind, at par with the academic one. Following steps might be helpful in raising the profile of vocational education and jobs.

- **Marketing campaigns** - Targeted marketing campaigns through different forms of electronic and print media could help change the negative perception of the society. Marketing campaigns could also be in the form of a fair; similar on the lines of Vocational Qualifications Day (VQ day) in the UK that celebrates the achievements of vocational education. It will help generate aspirational value for vocational courses. However, government commitment would be necessary for a long period of time because this strategy might not generate immediate results.
- **Improving physical infrastructure** - Better college buildings and workshops created through more public spending would help attract the attention of learners and create demand.
- **Strengthening curriculum using industry inputs** - A curriculum developed with the help of prospective employers would make the course relevant and also help students find jobs after they complete the course. It might also help in reducing training cost incurred by organisations.
- **Incentivising teachers and investing in their training** - Teachers who are better trained and also positively incentivised to impart knowledge would build the capacity of the learner. The incentives should preferably be based on teacher performance, for example number of students who complete training, number of students who get placements etc... for improved outcomes.

<sup>27</sup>C&G (2008). *Skills Development: Attitudes and Perceptions*. London: City and Guilds Publications.

<sup>28</sup>C&G (2011). *Building Business through Apprenticeships*. London: City and Guilds Publications.

- **Attracting private investment** - Private investments could help build future infrastructure and bring better management practices. The model should however be such that there is sufficient built-in incentive for private sector to invest in vocational development initiatives.
- **Strengthening VET** - At present Vocational Education and Training (VET) is introduced at senior secondary standards (11th and 12th grade). It is important to make the VET interesting for learners, not just by introducing a variety of courses but also introducing them in early grades to help students learn them naturally while growing-up.
- **Creating a vocational qualification framework** - A framework is required that would allow students of vocational courses to attain qualifications ranging from higher secondary to doctorate levels (vertical mobility) and also help switch between vocational and academic course at different stages of the qualification ladder (horizontal mobility). It will also help in making their skills fungible; hence will allow better career mobility.
- **Ensuring quality** - Create appropriate regulatory mechanisms to ensure the quality of graduates passed out both from publicly and privately funded institutions would be important. This will give confidence to employers in hiring vocational graduates as well as learners in opting for vocational education.

### ***Case Study: Vocational Qualifications Day (VQ Day)***

VQ Day is a national celebration of vocational qualifications for students, teachers and employers in the UK. It shines a light on and recognises the millions of talented and skilled people throughout the country who are awarded VQs. This event was launched in 2008 and is held every year in the month of June. The activities in the event include award ceremonies, interactive skills demonstrations, students' competition, dignitary and celebrity visits, workshops, fashion shows and business breakfast. It attracts participants from all over the country. In the 2012 VQ Day, over 400 schools, colleges and work-based providers got involved in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The highlight of the VQ Day event is the VQ Day Award given to learners who have shown outstanding achievement in their career as a result of vocational qualifications they have attained. The qualifications that have a largely vocational content and are awarded through a recognized professional body are included in the contest. The contestants nominate themselves or their candidates for the competition. After a rigorous





evaluation, a VQ Learner of the Year is awarded for each of the nine English regions: North East, North West, West Midlands, East Midlands, East of England, London, South East, South West, Yorkshire and Humber plus Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Finally, a national winner is selected from amongst the nine regions.

The VQ Day intends to promote vocational achievement in all forms, whether through apprenticeships, courses in further education, training or employee training. Celebrating the vocational achievement and presenting high quality practical and vocational learning attaches an aspirational value to skill based education and training.

For more information, please visit <http://www.vqday.org.uk/about-vq-day>

# Chapter IV



**Advice and Guidance**



## 4.1. Introduction

Career advice and guidance is a process that enables individuals to take a well-informed and realistic decision about one's future career. In India, family and social networks generally provide this service informally. The parents, relatives, neighbours and teachers who are part of this network often advise students in choosing educational streams that can ensure high return on investment. They guide the students to become a doctor, an engineer, a management graduate or a public servant and earn high salaries or have access to administrative power.

This informal system of career advice and guidance worked well till the eighties. It was because the career choices in India, both for parents and learners, were limited to streams such as medicine, engineering, law, armed forces and public administration. Also, the demand and supply fluctuations in the labour market were largely static. Hence, the knowledge that the providers had accumulated over generations was sufficient to advise and guide students. That knowledge required little updating.

The start of nineties changed the structure of labour market in India. Economic liberalization paved the way for multinational corporations to set up their business in the country and also opened doors for indigenous companies invest in new products and untapped market. In order to expand and diversify, the industries started demanding and hiring people with variety of skills and knowledge. This opened career prospects in areas such as hospitality, health services, security services, agriculture extension, information technology etc... These career choices that either did not exist earlier or were not in demand now promised rewarding career prospects.

The present job market is constantly changing and evolving. As a result present day learners find it difficult to seek informed and realistic career advice and guidance from parents, family members, neighbours or teachers. The informal providers at the same time find it difficult to constantly update their knowledge and cope with information needs and aspirations of present generation. Hence, there is need for a specialist formal career advice and guidance system in the country that keeps pace with the changing realities of the job market.

## 4.2. What is career advice and guidance?

Career advice and guidance is often misunderstood as a service just to assist students in choosing a subject stream that would be helpful in linking them to a rewarding career in future. Rather, it has a much broader scope and relevance. The definition below, adopted partly from OECD Policy Makers Handbook highlights the important aspects of an effective career advice and guidance system<sup>29</sup>.

<sup>29</sup>OECD (2004a). *Policy Makers Handbook*. Paris: OECD Publications.



- Career advice and guidance is for all. It is a set of service and activities, the objective of which is to help individuals, of any age and at any point throughout their lives, manage their career. Research studies too suggest that career advice and guidance are effective with most age group.<sup>30</sup>
- It is an on-going process that intends to facilitate realistic and informed decision making regarding three distinct choices,
  - Type of school or college: It relates to advice and guidance to a child (and parents if the child is too young) and grown-ups in choosing the type of school or college he/she should attend based on interest.
  - Type of training: It covers training to school going students and adults (of any age group and at any point in their career) in order to equip them with appropriate skills or knowledge and make them more employable.
  - Type of job: It relates to assistance given to individuals in choosing appropriate job in order to match his interest and prospective job opportunities.
- Career advice and guidance service may be found in schools, universities and colleges, in training institutions, in public employment services (government sector), in the workplace, in the voluntary or community sector and in the private sector.
- Career advice and guidance activities may take place on an individual or group basis, and may be face-to-face (career counselling) or at a distance (including telephone help lines and web-based services). They include career information provision (in print, ICT-based and other forms), assessment and self-assessment tools, counselling interviews, career education programmes (to help individuals develop their self-awareness, opportunity awareness, and career management skills), taster programmes (to sample options before choosing them), work search programmes, and transition services.
  - Counselling is the most dominant tool in career advice and guidance. It is recognised to have the biggest effect<sup>31</sup>. It is conducted by trained professionals who have diverse knowledge about the present labour market requirements and future trends. They are also trained to help counselee gain greater self-awareness of his aptitude, interest, skills and personality and thus facilitate him take career related decisions.

<sup>30</sup> OECD (2004b). *Career Guidance and Public Policy, Bridging the Gap*. Paris: OECD Publications.

<sup>31</sup> OECD (2004b), *ibid*.

## 4.3. Benefits of formal career advice and guidance system and stakeholders role

A formal system for advice and guidance is a new concept in India. Though untested in the India context, evidence from developed countries strongly suggests that a robust career guidance system can address the needs of present generation of students, and help employees improve their employability. It can also contribute to labour market efficiency by addressing the issues of demand and supply mismatch<sup>32</sup>. In order to create an effective career advice and guidance system, it is necessary for all stake holders to play a key role in various capacities.

Listed below are the expected long and short-term benefits of a structured career advice and guidance system and roles that the stakeholders might play in order to create such a system.

### 4.3.1. Learners:

Learner would benefit the most out of an effective career advice and guidance system. It would help them be aware of their skills, aptitude, interest and personality and hence decide on a school or college, training and a job that not just matches their traits but is also in tune with requirements of the job market. This would result in better wages, increased job satisfaction and better career planning.

Research carried out in developed as well as developing countries suggest that young people value vocational education and training, but often do not have a full understanding of the employment paths available to them<sup>33</sup>.

The advice seekers have the most important role to play in this regard by realising that it is rather beneficial to consult a professional advisor or guide if they are not able to decide educational and job choices on their own or even with the help of informal actors.

### 4.3.2. Family:

A learner's parents and family is likely to benefit greatly as a result of better wages earned by the learner and his higher job satisfaction. Therefore, as an important step parents and family should realize that they might not always possess adequate knowledge and skills in guiding the child to choose appropriate educational institutions or career path, and a professional assistance is required for a better decision making. It is important for parents and family to create an environment at home where visiting a career counsellor is an acceptable course of action and that could happen at any point in a person's life and at any age.

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<sup>32</sup>OECD (2004b), *ibid*.

<sup>33</sup>CSD (2011). *Practical Matters: What young people think about vocational education in England, South Africa & the Netherlands*. London: CSD Publications.



### 4.3.3. Educational and training institutions:

An effective career advice and guidance in schools, colleges, universities and vocational training institutions would be helpful in arresting student's drop-outs, thus improving the performance of the institution.

In public as well as private schools, the school management and also parents-teachers association should work to create provisions to employ trained counsellors who can guide students to choose interesting subjects keeping in perspective the kind of skill set they have. In a vocational training institute an effective system would help a student find an appropriate job and career path. However, it is important for school management and others to note that advice and guidance is different from Vocational Education and Training (VET) courses. The former involves preparation for career decision-making. The later involves preparation for entry to a specific employment sector through developing the necessary skills and qualifications<sup>34</sup>.

### 4.3.4. Employers:

Employers would greatly benefit if there is an effective career advice and guidance system at the workplace. On the job advice and guidance for realizing the strengths and weakness of an employee would help the organization in assigning him/her roles that are productive. This would also allow the employee to realize the nature of vocational role in which he can establish a meaningful exchange with others, thus contributing in creating his work identity<sup>35</sup>. This is likely to have a positive impact on employee attrition. Even when an employee is not able to fit within the roles of the company such system might help identify jobs that are relevant for the individual, outside the company.

Career advice and guidance system in organization could also help in giving feedbacks to counsellors. They can suggest what kind of new skills their organization need at present and would be looking for in future. This would facilitate real-time and realistic guidance. Overall, an effective system could bring long-term organizational benefits.

### 4.3.5. Policy makers:

Career advice and guidance could serve as an effective tool to improve the outcome of education system as it forms the interface between education and labour market<sup>36</sup>. It would also help in enhancing labour productivity of the individual and society as a whole because more people would choose their career based on their interest. In the long run it has a definite

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<sup>34</sup>OECD (2004a), *ibid*.

<sup>35</sup>OECD (2004b), *ibid*.

<sup>36</sup>OECD (2004b), *ibid*.





potential to address the mismatch between labour supply and demand. It will help labour market better allocate resource and hence contribute to the labour market productivity. Career guidance is also seen as being able to contribute to equity goals, for example by supporting the disadvantaged or by addressing gender equity<sup>37</sup>. As the nation would grow old, an effective career advice and guidance would also help in smooth transition to retirement.

Given the many benefits to the society, policy makers have the most important role to play in creating an effective career advice system. They might identify different approaches of effective career guidance that could be effective in the Indian context. The scope could be widened to include telephone help lines, web based services such as an online test, advertisements to create awareness so that learners and also mid-career personnels seek professional advice.

### ***Case Study: Advice and Guidance Services in South Africa:***

The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) under the Ministry of Higher Education and Training launched a career advice helpline in 2010 to help a learner access professional advice and guidance from trained counsellors. The helpline is called 'NQF and Career Advice Helpline' and it targets students, workers, unemployed, people with disabilities and adults. The counsellors could be reached by phone, emails and even a mobile text message to avail the service. An amount of Rand 100 million was allocated to the project for a three years period.

Other than the career advice helpline, SAQA uses media channels such as newspapers; radio and internet sites (especially Facebook and Twitter) to reach out to different types of advice seekers. For example, a website (<http://www.careerhelp.org.za/>) is targeted at learners, parents, school-leavers and others interested in career field and is populated with a wealth of valuable information on learning options, skills in demand and financing of studies. Similarly under the Khetha campaign banner, SAQA broadcasts career guidance advice in nine official South African languages with the slogan 'Make the right choice. Decide your future'. The radio programmes comprise in-depth discussions on various careers and advice on school subject choice, available qualifications and sources of funding.

For more information please visit, <http://www.saqa.org.za/>

<sup>37</sup>OECD (2004a), *ibid*.





# Chapter V



**Leadership in Skills**



Everyone has a stake in skill development. Individuals need it to develop satisfying and well-paid careers; businesses need it in order to develop productive workforces and achieve their business objectives; government need it to ensure economic and social prosperity and build a dynamic, investment-friendly economy. This shared interest implies shared responsibility, but in practice this is not always recognised by the various stakeholders. There can sometimes be a tendency to 'pass the buck', particularly when it comes to the question of who should pay for training.

The most successful approaches to skills development are those which recognise the need for shared ownership of the skills agenda and work to foster the active contribution of all stakeholders. In the Netherlands, for example, Knowledge Centres - the Dutch equivalent of Sector Skills Councils - bring together employers, trade unions, skills professionals and policy makers with an equal stake in ensuring skill development meets the needs of all<sup>38</sup>.

'Skills for All' therefore needs to be understood not just as a question of access, but also as a question of leadership: all those with an interest in skills development need to be leaders and champions of vocational education and training. In India, leaders are emerging every day, but the importance of leadership in this area is not always recognised. FICCI's recent introduction of a 'skills pledge' - through which business and political leaders publicly committed themselves both to developing their own skills and helping others to develop theirs - is an example of the power of leadership.

## 5.1. Leadership or management?

In their 1973 essay *Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning*, Rittel and Webber distinguish between 'tame' and 'wicked' issues: that is, between issues for which a known methodology to tackle them exists, and those whose complexity or newness means that the solutions have yet to be devised<sup>39</sup>. Addressing the former, while they may be complicated, requires the administration of known management procedures; addressing the latter is a more complex task as it may not be clear what needs to be done in order to do so. Such problems require innovation, willingness to try new ideas, and courage to take people in hitherto unknown directions: in other words, leadership.

Skill development in a few countries may be regarded as having reached the stage of being a 'tame' issue. While no country's system is perfect, we can say that some developed countries

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<sup>38</sup> *Manipal City & Guilds (2011). A global study to get India world-ready.*

<sup>39</sup> *Rittel, H. and M. Webber (1973). Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning. Policy Sciences 4 pp 155-69.*



have well-established structures and management processes such that the question of how to deliver skills training is one of applying known, tried and tested methodologies. But these methodologies work because they have been designed to fit the social, economic, cultural and technological context in which they have been developed.

India's situation is quite different. The scale and nature of the skills challenge here - and the ambitious timetable the Indian government has set to achieve it - is unprecedented. No-one can claim to know the proven management techniques that will deliver a skilled India: getting there will involve entirely new solutions and approaches that draw on, but do not replicate, what has happened elsewhere in the world. Skilling India is, without doubt, a 'wicked' issue - one that needs leadership to deal with.

## 5.2. A shared challenge

Does this mean that all India needs to achieve its ambitions is a few strong leaders, to show the rest of the population the way towards a skilled future? Quite the opposite: the fact that leadership is required emphasises, rather than detracts from, the need for collective effort. As Keith Grint points out, no single individual leader - or even group of leaders - can have sufficient knowledge or power to effectively deal with highly complex, 'wicked' issues, so leadership must be a collective affair. Leaders are nothing without followers, and leadership can be seen as 'the art of engaging a community in facing up to complex collective problems'<sup>40</sup>.

This gets to the heart of the leadership challenge of skills development in India: how to bring the Indian population along with the vision of Indian policy makers. It has long been no secret that vocational education has a poor image in India, and that part of the challenge of skilling the country is to change people's minds about what skills can offer them in terms of development, income, job prospects and social status. In this context, leadership requires not only coming up with the innovative (possible) solutions required to deal with an unprecedented challenge, but also the ability to transform the way people think about these issues.

A useful concept here is that of 'distance' between leaders and followers. Some styles of leadership emphasise closeness: a leader can present herself as an ordinary person, to whom followers can relate, in an effort to bring them along with her. Some styles emphasise difference: in order to establish authority and trust, the leader positions himself as being above ordinary people in the sense of having special knowledge or ability<sup>41</sup>. Both leadership styles

<sup>40</sup> Grint, K. (2010). *Leadership: a very short introduction*. Oxford: OUP.

<sup>41</sup> Grint, K. (2010). *Ibid.*





have validity and both can be employed in different contexts in the challenge of building a skilled India.

### 5.3. I can do it - so can you

To take the first style, for instance: there is a need to develop a narrative around real-life stories of people who have achieved success through vocational education. Such stories need to be told by people to whom potential vocational learners can relate: leaders, in other words, need to be found from the ranks of existing learners as well as from policy makers and business people.

Developing such stories requires commitment and time. FICCI's inclusion of young learners in their recent Skills Summit may be the first step on the road to building up a process of dialogue between learners, from those who have benefited from skills training to those who may be sceptical about it. "Learner leaders" need support to be able to develop this kind of dialogue. In the UK, for instance, the annual Vocational Qualifications Day, which celebrates the achievements of vocational learners, attracts wide media attention and gives vocational learners the chance to show that they are aspirational and high-achieving. In many countries, success in the biannual World Skills competitions gives a further opportunity for successful vocational learners to show their skills, tell their stories and inspire others to follow them.

### 5.4 Bringing in diverse leaders

The second style of leadership - emphasising difference, distance and authority - recognises that sometimes, leadership messages are most effective if they come from someone who is presumed to have higher levels of knowledge or ability: someone, in other words, with authority. Thus, statements from those in positions of power have enormous value in terms of changing attitudes to skills. India's political leadership is already demonstrating this, with the creation of the NSDC and public commitments to developing strategies to achieve the task of 'transformational upscaling of skills'<sup>42</sup>. Many Indian business leaders, too, have gone on record emphasizing the importance of skills.

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<sup>42</sup>Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, opening remarks at the meeting of the Prime Minister's National Council on Skill Development, 19 January 2012





However, authority and influence come from a wider range of sources than traditional, 'establishment' leaders. Changing hearts and minds can involve bringing in a wider range of leaders than traditional approaches have emphasized. In Thailand, for instance, a recent UNESCO project saw Thai celebrities take part in a meeting and concert for non-formal students in an effort to inspire them to further achievements in learning. In the UK, high-earning celebrities who started their careers with vocational training have been included on the widely-publicised City & Guilds 'Rich List', demonstrating directly how vocational education can be a route to success. Initiatives like these bring in leadership figures from beyond the traditional sources and have the potential to capture the imagination and attention of a wider range of people.

In fact, all partners in skills development have the potential to be leaders: from the training practitioner bringing in innovative pedagogical methods to the trade union organisation supporting their members to gain skills. India's challenge is to embrace all of these sources of leadership and spread the good practice already evident in the country.

## 5.5. Getting the message right

So leadership in skills for India must be a shared endeavour, and it must embrace leadership wherever it comes from. But leadership is all about communication. It is not enough simply to demonstrate what is possible: leaders need to bring others along with their vision. The examples of leadership mentioned in this section all have something in common: they emphasise skills development as something that is about aspiration, achievement and pride in learning. This is a crucial point in India, where it is often assumed that vocational education is what is provided when other choices have failed. It is not unusual to hear public statements to the effect that skills training should be expanded in India because there is a need to 'do something about drop-outs'.

It is true that, by offering alternative and possibly more engaging forms of learning to people who may not thrive in the mainstream education system, vocational education may be able to help reduce drop-out rates. But to focus on this as its main purpose is mistaken. Successful skills training must, at root, be driven by individuals' career ambitions and interests: it must, in other words, come from a positive decision to undergo training. Motivation and goals are fundamental to successful learning.

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<sup>43</sup><http://www.unescobkk.org/nc/education/appeal/appeal-news/news-and-events/article/unescos-meet-and-greet-with-thai-celebrities-for-non-formal-students/>, retrieved on 14 October 2012

<sup>44</sup><http://www.cityandguilds.com/About-Us/Broadsheet-News/April-2012/News/Vocational-Rich-List>, retrieved on 14 October 2012



Leadership means spelling out a vision, and the people of India need a more compelling vision than 'reducing drop-outs'. A vision of a country that offers all its citizens, whatever their talents, interests and aptitudes, a route towards a fulfilling career and a stable and dignified livelihood. A vision of a country that recognizes learning achievement, whatever form it takes. A vision that offers hope for achievement, not a consolation prize for those who have failed. It is up to each of us to spell out that vision to India's learners if 500 million of them are to pursue skills training as their route to future success.



# Key Recommendations

- In order to improve access to skills, especially for rural communities and women, training institutions should be established in remote areas to increase the outreach. The disadvantaged groups should be given financial support and the entry requirements for them should be made more flexible.
- Recognition of prior learning should be built-in as a key element of the implementation of the developing National Qualifications Framework. Different pilot projects should also be explored to understand the challenges on the ground and raise awareness of the principles of RPL.
- To change attitudes towards vocational education, targeted marketing campaigns are necessary to stress the aspirational value of skills. Successful social marketing strategies used elsewhere should be examined for their possible use in India.
- In order to make skill based education a preferred choice, policy makers should ensure better quality of training and integration of the curriculum with the employer requirements. This will ensure better labour market outcomes for learners and increased productivity of labour for employers.
- A formal system of career advice and guidance should be set up to provide support to learners of all age and at different stages of their career. A dedicated career advice and guidance system will help learners understand the option that are open to them in terms of careers, education and training and help them achieve these options.
- All the different stakeholders - policy makers, employers, trainers, parents and learners, should consider how they can play a leadership role in skilling India and also send out the key message that skill development is about aspiration, achievement and pride in learning.

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