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Effective Education for Employment: A global perspective

A report commissioned by Edexcel
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Foreword by Ross Hall

Director of International, Edexcel

/// We will need better people in 10 years time; this will be about the demands of the market place. ///

Employer, Brazil

This report is the result of a 12-month research project into a critical issue facing governments across the world today; namely, how well the employment and training needs of employers, individuals and governments are being met by education and training systems. This balance between the supply and demand sides of education is becoming more and more intense as countries across the world contend with difficulties arising out of the current economic downturn. It makes what we call 'effective education for employment' an even more fundamental issue.

This project began in 2007 and finished in 2008. During this time economic conditions in many countries worsened and even now, early in 2009, many commentators are forecasting difficult conditions persisting in varying degrees into 2010/11 and possibly beyond.

These conditions make the need for effective education for employment even greater. If employers don't get the skilled workforce they need, if individuals don't get the training they need and if governments don't get the education and training levels they need then economic competitiveness and social cohesion suffer.

Yet getting a good 'fit' between supply and demand in education and training is not straightforward. Needs vary, priorities change and resources can become stretched. It is a challenge that many countries are tackling in different ways.

Our research ranged over 25 countries and heard from over 2,000 stakeholders. To each and every one, we extend our thanks for their support and contributions to what we hope will be an extremely useful piece of work on how best to develop effective education for employment.

Ross Hall

Director of International, Edexcel

April 2009

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Project partners

Edexcel conceived and commissioned the Effective Education for Employment project. A Pearson company, Edexcel operates in over 85 countries and is one of the world's leading providers of professional education, primarily through its provision of BTEC qualifications. For more information, please visit www.edexcel.com.

White Loop was the lead delivery partner. As well as co-authoring this report, White Loop designed and delivered the international round-table series and provided strategic input to every other part of the project. White Loop is a London-based consultancy specialising in stakeholder engagement, strategic communications and the provision of digital media services. For more information, please visit www.whiteloop.com.

The primary research activity for this project was conducted by Insight Research Group, an international market research company based in London and New York. Established in 1983, Insight specialises in providing an in-depth understanding of stakeholder needs, attitudes and behaviours through primary qualitative and quantitative research for clients based in the UK and overseas. For more information, please visit www.insightrg.com.

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// Aptitude is something you can test but attitude is 100% to be seen after the interview. //

Employee, India

Introduction



Introduction

Aims of the project

This project considered two key questions:

1. What are the key challenges involved in developing workforces that fulfil the needs of businesses, organisations, industry sectors and economies around the world?
2. How can we start to build practical solutions that result in truly effective education for employment provision?

What is effective education for employment?

For the purposes of this project, effective education for employment is defined as:

'the development and assessment of the requisite skills, knowledge and behaviours that constitute an effective employee in the 21st century'.

In some countries, this is collectively described as a 'skill set'.

Methodologies used

We adopted a range of methodologies during this project, including:

Secondary research

The project began with a far-reaching assessment of current thinking and approaches to professional education using secondary sources. This culminated in a secondary research report, which informed the design of all subsequent research content.

International round-table series

To enable engagement with a wide range of leaders in business, education and policy and to ensure a cross-section of opinion, a series of round-table discussions was instigated in the five countries of Brazil, China, India, South Africa and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Those taking part included government representatives, policy makers, business leaders from corporations and small to medium size enterprises (SMEs) and individuals working in education provision and academic study. These people were chosen for their depth of expertise, insight into the challenges faced by their own education systems and economies and their current engagement in shaping the future of education for employment. Overall, 85 people took part in the round-table series across six countries, including the UK. All participants attended voluntarily.

Irrespective of the business models they adopt in response to ongoing global change, the war for talent remains a key concern among CEOs worldwide, ranking second only to a potential economic downturn as the biggest threat to business growth.

Employer, Brazil



45% of employees are receiving limited or very little training from their employer.

Source: Edexcel research 2008



Exam assessment continues to be the most popular method of assessment – 73% learners assessed through examination.

Source: Edexcel research 2008

Primary research project

A multi-stage primary research project was commissioned to supplement the findings from the international round-table series. Qualitative in-depth interviews were augmented by qualitative bulletin boards as well as quantitative online surveys among employers, employees, learners and training providers. Around 2,000 respondents took part in this phase of the research.

Results from this primary research project are integrated throughout this report.

The scale of the research

The Effective Education for Employment report is based on the findings of a 12-month integrated research project. Initial work was carried out in 25 countries. Follow-up activity allowed us to focus in more depth on the five emerging economies of Brazil, China, India, South Africa and the UAE.

Contributors included government representatives, leading thinkers, educators, employers, employees and learners. A variety of research methodologies were adopted including face-to-face interviews, round-table discussions, quantitative surveys, telephone interviews, online questionnaires and bulletin boards.

- 25 countries
- 2,000 participants
- Round-table discussions with thought leaders
- Feedback from government, industry, educators, employees and learners

Report structure

Chapter 1 of the report sets out the global context behind the need for effective education for employment. It identifies a number of generic economic and business challenges that help define the nature of this expectation.

Chapter 2 looks in more detail at the components of effective education for employment. Based on the research and various round-table groups, it attempts to articulate the key features that constitute effective education for employment.

Chapters 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 look in depth at the five economies of Brazil, China, India, South Africa and the UAE. The aim is to match the theory of effective education for employment with the reality facing individual countries.

Chapter 8 offers a list of recommendations and suggestions provided by participants through discussions, interviews and questionnaires.

The appendices include a glossary and a list of round-table participants.

Summary of the findings

A global challenge

Feedback from interviews in over 25 countries has persistently drawn our attention to one key point - that there is a significant disconnection between education systems and the needs of 21st century employers, both public and private. The match between what employers, individuals and governments seek and what respective education and training systems provide appears ill-fitting in many countries.

Effective education for employment is now a core driver of economic globalisation. While the findings suggest some country-specific skills demands, the requirements are consistent across the world. Businesses and organisations in different countries are looking for individuals with a similar set of behaviours, skills and knowledge that can be adapted to specific work conditions.

The skills race

The 'global skills race' is real and is intensifying. Levels of skills and education are vital components in the skills race and will increasingly determine the economic fortunes of many countries.

Many education challenges are now related to behaviours. It is becoming increasingly important for workers to have the right attitude, a willingness to learn and an understanding of how to conduct themselves in the workplace. These are the transferable qualities that many employers are seeking.

The key challenges

To deliver effective education for employment, we face the following key challenges:

1. developing shared employment profiles that connect employers to educators
2. incorporating knowledge, skills and behaviours into education and training programmes
3. building programmes that effectively stretch and develop these qualities for use in the real world
4. developing transferable qualities explicitly to connect academic with professional learning, progressively through the various stages of learning
5. building comprehensive, progressive learning frameworks
6. developing and extending the quality of teaching
7. assessing and certificating learners appropriately
8. sharing and promoting best practice.

We have summarised our findings in Figure 1. This shows a typical education and economic cycle, the issues relating to each element in this cycle and ideas and recommendations for positive change.



Only 3 in 10 learners expect to develop portable qualities from their studies – the expectation is that these will be developed when in work.

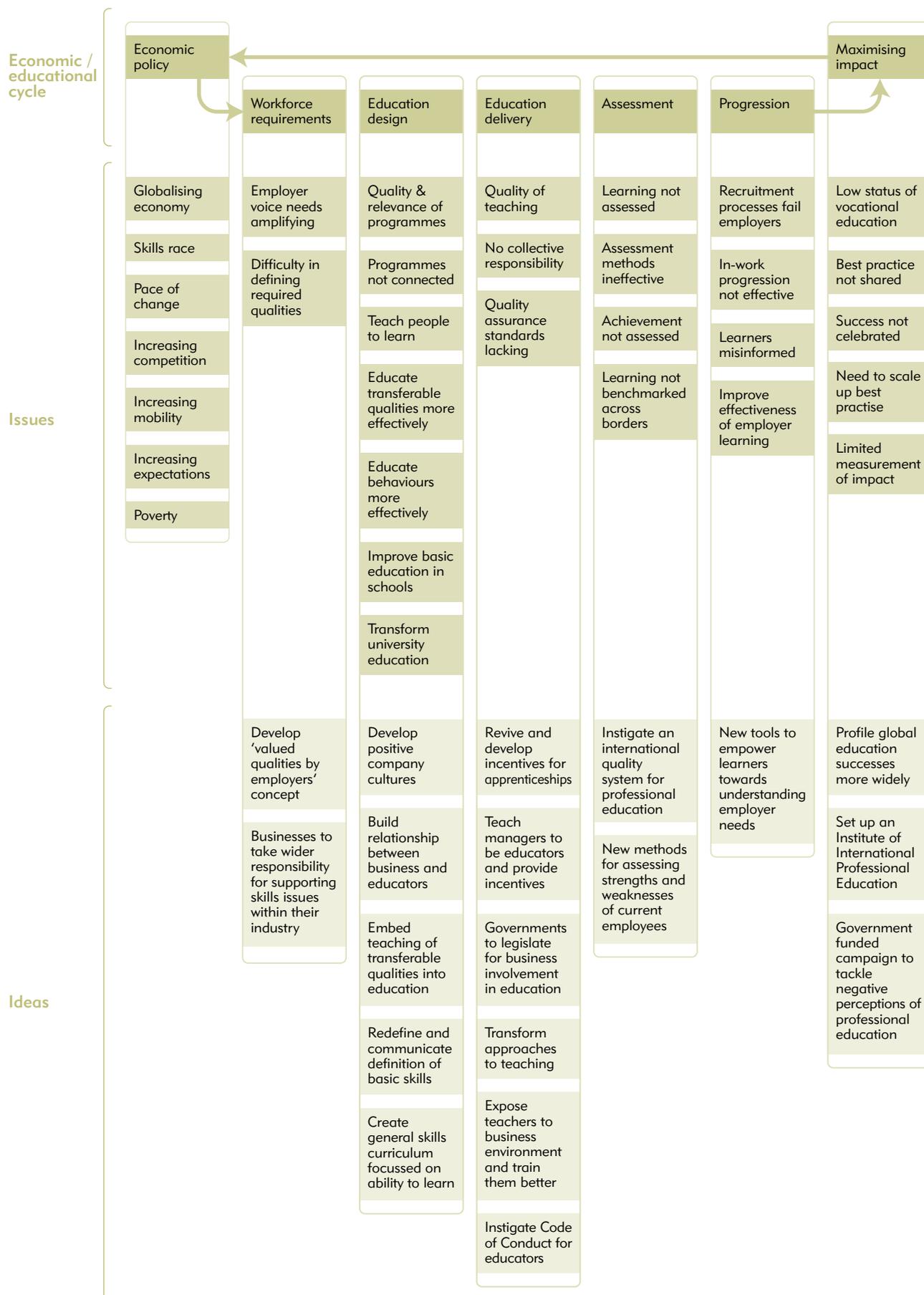
Source: Edexcel research 2008



Only 6 in 10 employees are satisfied with learning & development they received from their employer.

Source: Edexcel research 2008

Figure 1: Effective professional education: global challenges and possible solutions





Chapter 1

Global context for the report

Chapter 1 Global context for the report



Only 50% of employers provide learning & development certification which demonstrates levels of competence.

Source: Edexcel research 2008

A globalising economy

Coalescing economies and new economic powers

The economies of the world are in many ways coalescing. There is a big increase in global outsourcing within the manufacturing and service sectors, and businesses now see no boundaries to setting up wherever they think their interests will be served best. Amongst other outcomes, this has resulted in the emergence of new economic powers.

A global skills race

The global skills race is real and it is intensifying. Skills will determine economic fortunes for many countries in the foreseeable future. Education will be the key to competing in the race.

Clear commonalities between countries

The nature of skills demand is increasingly consistent, with businesses and organisations in different countries looking for people with a core set of transferable qualities.

The demands on education

An unprecedented pace of change

Economic growth rates in Brazil, China and India have been outstripping those of established economies by two or three times. This is creating significant challenges for education systems in these countries, and governments and businesses generally agree that future economic success rests on the ability of educators and industry to develop and nurture a highly flexible workforce.

The need for work-ready employees

With the intensity and scale of competition rising rapidly around the world, industry increasingly wants to recruit work-ready employees. Businesses need workers who excel in quality service provision, innovation and leadership. What's more, competitiveness can be inhibited by the costs of recruiting, 'misrecruiting', developing and retaining a competitive workforce.

A changing workforce

Employees need to be more flexible

There is a growing sense that there are no barriers to educational or professional mobility. This increasing mobility and the rapid pace of change in particular roles or sectors are creating demand for a more flexible, adaptable employee.

Increasing expectations among populations

Economic growth is funding increased educational opportunity. This, in turn, is raising expectation levels among learners and employees. They want better jobs and faster progression.

Growth is also creating unprecedented employment opportunities. In many countries, a higher standard of living has become the aspiration for workers and those entering employment for the first time.

Economic challenges

There can be no doubt we are now experiencing an unprecedented global recession that may be deeper and more far-reaching than any previously seen.

In January, the International Monetary Fund reduced its projection for global growth for 2009 from 2.2% to 0.5%, and their predictions are echoed by economists throughout the world.

In this context, developing the skills and capacities of a nation's workforce is even more critical to economic security and success.

Poverty and unemployment are still evident in emerging nations

Despite astonishing rates of economic growth, many emerging economies are still facing significant issues of poverty and unemployment. United Nations figures estimate that 21% of Brazil's population is living beneath the poverty line. Also, South Africa has seen significant economic growth without a growth in employment.

Achieving basic education demands

There are many examples of progressive and successful education initiatives around the world but education is not always very effective in developing the knowledge, skills and behaviours required for modern employment. Many countries are facing an ongoing struggle to provide access to basic education. In South Africa, it is estimated that 70% of those leaving the education system lack basic literacy and numeracy skills. There is a need to address basic education before higher-level skills can be taught for the workplace.

A changing business culture

In emerging economies like China and India, there are the significant challenges of moving a predominantly rural workforce from agricultural to industrial and knowledge-based activities.

Business challenges

A shortage of people with the skills businesses need

In most countries, there is a clear and significant shortage of individuals who are appropriately skilled to meet the demands of business and industry. Governments in all major economic centres recognise the acute need for improving and expanding professional education strategies.

Improving employability

Employability skills are increasingly on the agenda in the UK, Europe and the US, and the demand for these skills will inevitably develop in the global marketplace. These include the technical knowledge and ability to carry out a specific role and the behaviours and attitudes that are required to succeed in a commercial, service-orientated environment.



On the job learning is the backbone of most employers' training programmes. It is used by 7 in 10 employers.

Source: Edexcel research 2008



6 in 10 employees believe their academic and professional qualifications prepared them for work.

Source: Edexcel research 2008



Skills gaps exist for both new joiners and more experienced staff. Gaps around leadership, teamwork and creativity and innovation persist and continue to present employers with difficulties in training and development irrespective of experience level.

Source: Edexcel research 2008

Developing skilled managers

Evidence suggests that middle and senior management roles are not being filled by appropriately skilled individuals. This could, in part, be due to the speed of promotion that goes hand-in-hand with rapid economic growth.

Building on creativity and innovation

Creativity and innovation are qualities that are increasingly relevant to the modern business environment. The knowledge economy and the emerging concept of the experience economy require a workforce that has flexibility and creativity at its heart. The demand for talented people has never been higher, and the opportunities for individuals and businesses have never been greater.

Government, industry and educators

Academic learning still seen as superior to professional education

There is still a premium placed on academic learning; that is knowledge rather than skills and attitudes. However, employers have become increasingly concerned that recruits to the job market do not have the skills required to perform effectively in the workplace.

Linking industry demand with education design

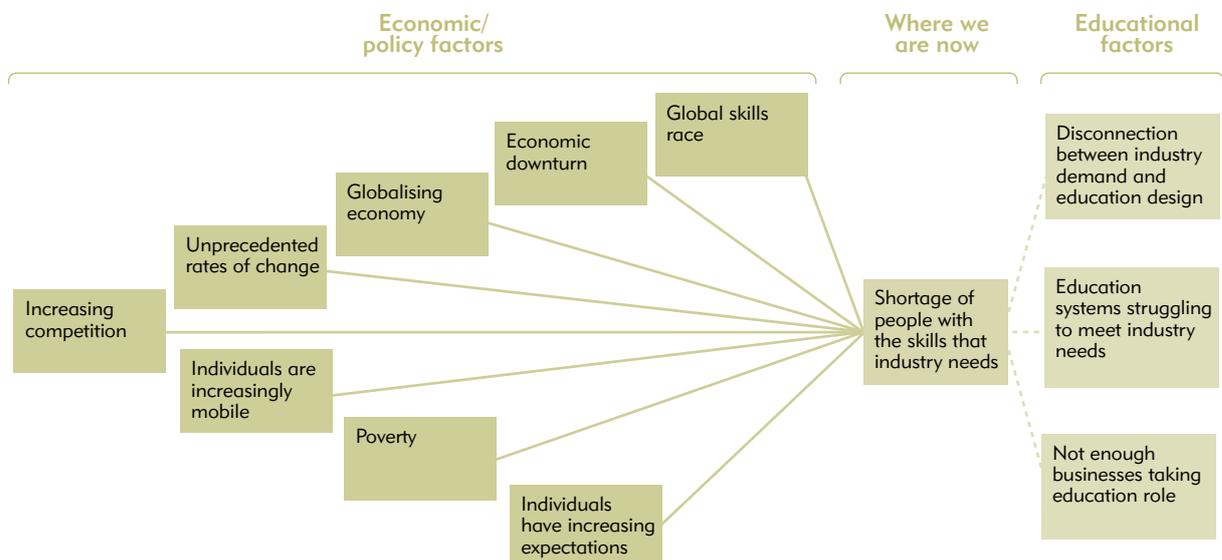
There is a big disconnection between industry and educators. Typically, course content is not sufficiently related to the workplace, particularly in academic education. This needs to be addressed and there must be mechanisms put in place to allow businesses to be more involved in the design and delivery of professional education.

More businesses should take an education role

It has become more important for industry to be more engaged in education. Firstly, there must be a way for employers to convey what they need from educators. Secondly, in-work education should be improved across the board and should be scalable to the wider population rather than delivered behind closed doors. And thirdly, there are few links between education and career progression.

Figure 2 provides an overview of the global context for this debate.

Figure 2: Global context





Chapter 2

Global themes from the findings

Chapter 2 Global themes from the findings

/// When we hire, language and communication skills are basics... and also a person's attitude and whether he is going to stay or not. ///

Employer, India

Workforce requirements

Amplifying the employer's voice

There seems to be general scepticism from business leaders towards the nature and level of their involvement in professional education strategy. In some cases, there are simply no mechanisms to facilitate this interaction. In others, the structures are seen as cumbersome, irrelevant or ineffective.

It is clear that industry should have the means to articulate what it needs and then contribute to the design of a solution. Improvements should be driven by policy and include initiatives that generate impact across the board. Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) in South Africa are a valid example here.

If governments and policy makers can provide the political and economic support for initiatives, businesses certainly seem positive about contributing. Moreover, those who manage this process most effectively will see the long-term benefits of having a policy driven by real needs.

A difficulty in defining valued qualities

Businesses can run into significant problems when communicating their needs. Some are ill-equipped to identify skills gaps and find it challenging to develop requirements into a coherent vision. Additionally, there needs to be more links between employers, government and educators, and these links should be more effective.

Without a clear exposition of the qualities businesses are looking for, education will always fail to meet demand. In addition, learners will continue to find it difficult to make informed educational choices.

Education design

Improving the quality and relevance of programmes

Many of the training and education markets we studied are vibrant but the quality and relevance of what the market delivers is inconsistent. It is vital, therefore, that we raise the quality of education programmes – in particular, the relevance of course content.

Employers are increasingly sceptical of qualifications that teach individuals to do a specific job. The current pace of industry change means some programmes are out of date before a student has completed a course. There are also cases where training in new specialist areas is not actually available through public institutions. The Managing Director of a successful animation studio in Mumbai told us, for example, that there are no publicly funded courses that he can

recruit from at the moment. In some areas, therefore, the education system is playing catch-up.

The quality and relevance of programmes will only improve if there are structures to facilitate industry and business involvement in the design of curricula.

Programmes are not interconnected

As training and education markets become more fragmented and deregulated, their programmes become increasingly unrelated to one another, not just between countries but within specific countries and even certain sectors. There is also a trend towards businesses 'going it alone' because they feel the education system is failing them. This can increase the sense of disconnection even further.

The isolated design of qualifications creates problems. Individuals may find themselves learning the same thing more than once, wasting their own money or that of an employer. They may also find it difficult to plan their own professional development due to a fragmented educational landscape.

We are not teaching people sufficiently how to learn

An employee's ability to learn is highly prized by employers. However, evidence shows that this attribute is often overlooked. It is also difficult to teach and impossible to quantify.

If an individual lacks the facility or attitude to learn, there is only so much additional education and training can achieve. As globalisation generates opportunities for talented individuals, a demonstrable ability to learn equates with adaptability – another commonly valued quality.

How you teach people to learn and how you then assess their ability to learn are issues that need addressing urgently.

Transferable qualities need to be taught more effectively

The role of these 'personal qualities' now and in the future, dominated discussions in every country. Some of the key comments are listed below.

Language: The terms used when speaking about personal qualities must be addressed. There is no unified definition of what we mean by soft skills – particularly in a global context. Some people referred to employability skills and others talked about 'job-ready' skills.

Skills mix: The combination of personal skills that are needed is wide and varied and yet they form the basis of valued qualities for employees.

Qualities: Essential qualities include the enthusiasm and capacity to learn, a positive and progressive attitude and a sense of responsibility. There are also more traditional 'soft skills' like communication, leadership and team working.

Teaching: One of the biggest challenges concerns the complexities of teaching and assessing these personal qualities. There is debate as to whether certain skills can be taught or whether they should actually be considered as a skill (for example, 'attitude' or 'respect'). The design and delivery of professional education programmes must reflect the need to address significant gaps in developing these qualities. We need a better



Nearly 1 in 2 employers say that staff turnover is high.

Source: Edexcel research 2008

understanding of the way people learn them. We must also consider more effective mechanisms for measuring the breadth and quality of an individual's personal qualities.

Attitude: Employers generally rank attitude as a key factor when recruiting and developing staff.

A focus on behaviours and attitudes

Employers in every country complained about young people leaving education without a fundamental awareness of how they should behave in the workplace. They also stressed how important a positive attitude was in developing effective, productive employees.

Expectation: There are some clear differences between countries. In the UK and India, candidates have high expectations of what a job should deliver (personally, financially and in terms of career), even though they cannot always match this with personal skill or experience. In South Africa and Brazil, expectations of entry-level positions are much lower. For employers in China, loyalty and commitment are key considerations.

Achievement: Many new entrants into the job market feel they have achieved enough simply by securing a job. They are not motivated to work hard or to progress further in terms of developing their skill and expertise.

Understanding: Understanding of what constitutes a 'good attitude' differs significantly between employers and (potential) employees. Common standards may need to be agreed as well as ways of communicating these qualities better to those entering work.

Responsibility: Society (families, schools, communities) must take equal responsibility for fostering more appropriate and realistic attitudes among those at the beginning of their careers.

A need to improve basic education in schools

The quality of primary and secondary education is vitally important wherever you are in the world. But candidates must already have a grounding in basic skills if further or higher education is to be effective in training work-ready individuals.

The provision and quality of basic education in the developing world is a particular challenge. It is easy to forget that many of the world's fastest growing economies are still facing huge battles against poverty which poses enormous challenges for the provision of education. The rewards of economic prosperity are already inspiring huge investment in basic education and, while it is important to sustain and increase this investment for social reasons, the long-term impact on the quality and size of the workforce will also be profound.

A need to transform university education

Divisions remain between academic and professional education; such distinctions are increasingly unhelpful and often misleading.

Many universities now teach what may be considered vocational degrees. They also continue to provide the majority of entrants into traditional professions like medicine and law. The quality and content of these courses still need to be transformed in the same way as those

/// There is a training culture now in India and in the next ten years it will be very big. ///

Training provider, India

taught in more vocational institutions. It is recommended that all diplomas and degree courses should incorporate the development of transferable qualities.

Education delivery

The quality of teachers

If we want to improve the quality and effectiveness of professional education, it is important teachers are fully trained first.

There are lots of examples of great teachers who are delivering quality content in dynamic and engaging ways. But we are not currently able to meet the higher demand for good teachers that accompanies rapid economic growth and the broadening of access to education.

Many countries are aware of the need to invest in teaching. Brazil, for example, is pursuing a significant programme of up-skilling. But more needs to be done. Teaching methods need to be reformed to accommodate more practical forms of teaching and learning. Classroom activities need to be focused on experiential activities. There also need to be more opportunities for interaction between learners and employers. This could take many forms but must be at the heart of professional education development.

No collective responsibility for education delivery

An exchange during the South African round-table meeting provided a revealing insight into one critical issue. One voice stated that it was not the job of schools to prepare people for work, with another responding to say that it was not the job of businesses to give people an education. The answer, it seems, lies somewhere in the middle.

Business and industry have to play a role if education is to meet the needs of the world's economies. The reality is that the vast majority of businesses – from corporations to SMEs – are already having a significant impact on the education of their own staff and to some extent their future workforce. The nature of this involvement is complex and varied. In many instances, business participation is optional. In Brazil, business participation in education is written into legislation. Elsewhere, companies are taking significant responsibility for educating their workforce because they believe their education system is letting them down.

Businesses are effectively replacing classroom teaching in many cases with their own high-quality, business-led training. Learners often receive far greater access to real-world experience. It is also much easier for a business to design and fine-tune content to ensure relevance.

This business initiative largely works in isolation from publicly funded education, however. Professional education typically starts when a candidate joins an organisation. In-house training is seen as part of a company's competitive edge, which means there is also a lack of cooperation within industry sectors. While in-house education and training can increase the skills pool, the lack of cooperation means that it has limited impact on the education system as a whole.

The necessary impact will only be felt once we develop economic and practical models for sharing the responsibility for professional education.

Quality assurance standards are lacking

In an increasingly fragmented marketplace, there is a greater need for



1 in 4 employers admit that it is difficult to recruit the right staff.

Source: Edexcel research 2008

recognised quality standards. Quality assurance is vital in promoting good practice and rewarding those who offer genuinely effective education programmes. It is also important for learners so they can be assured that the learning they undergo is of proven quality.

Ineffective in-work education programmes

Research shows that when individuals start work with skills gaps, these gaps tend to remain for some time. This suggests that many in-work education programmes are failing to deliver effective skills development. In some cases, the reason for persistent skills gaps is that many employers provide little or no education. Some employers see it as the role of the individual to up-skill themselves.

Part of the problem lies in the fact that there are few diagnostic techniques to identify an individual's skill needs. There is also evidence to suggest that many in-work education programmes are not linked to effective or validated assessment models.

Assessment and certification

Learning is not being assessed

By assessing the effectiveness and impact of learning, an individual can identify what they should progress to next.

Though a lack of assessments does not necessarily reduce the impact of learning, assessment itself provides a vital mechanism for measuring and grading learner progress.

Assessment methods are ineffective

There are significant challenges around the way learning achievements are assessed. We need better mechanisms for businesses to assess the current strengths and weaknesses of employees, in particular, their transferable qualities. There also needs to be ways of benchmarking qualifications against those of other providers.

Inadequate certification

In too many cases, certification is not representative of a particular level of competence. Instead, it just gives proof of attendance or an indication of the ability to pass an exam rather than do a job.

In some cases, learning is not certificated at all. Many in-work education programmes, for instance, are not certificated or accredited by a recognised body, and this makes it difficult for the employee or learner to prove they have successfully met a particular standard or level of competence.

Employers still value certification as a way of understanding or measuring competence. But, they are losing faith in certification, feeling that much of it has little value.

Learning is not benchmarked across borders

The increased mobility of workers has created a need for better international standards of accreditation and certification.

Staff move between countries in particular areas of business. But country-specific technical requirements sometimes force employees to retrain locally even when they are sufficiently qualified to do a job.

This is also an issue of progression for employees. As more individuals cross international boundaries to work, they want to be able to take their



2 in 10 current employees acknowledge that their qualifications did not prepare them for the job they do now.

Source: Edexcel research 2008

qualifications with them and ensure that they will hold value wherever they go.

Progression

Recruitment processes fail employers

Staff recruitment must change as the value of generic skills and attributes increases and workforces become more mobile. One of the key problems is that businesses find it difficult to assess the level of a job applicant's transferable qualities. In part, this is due to a lack of qualifications that teach and assess these qualities effectively. There are also outdated recruitment methodologies.

One of the most valuable skills for new recruits is the ability to work in a team but very few businesses have any idea of how to assess this quality during an interview. The most common approach is to ask an individual directly about teamwork but this isn't proof of the practical application of teamwork.

Some organisations – in particular, larger businesses at the top of their profession – have developed more sophisticated practical interview procedures that allow them to get a much fuller picture of the characteristics and traits an individual would bring to a role. But these examples are unfortunately the exception.

If organisations are to make the most of the talent that exists, they must develop better ways of understanding and assessing the qualities a candidate holds.

In-work progression is not effective

Employers are not currently providing their employees with effective mechanisms to map their job progression, and this is having a negative impact on professional education choices.

There is not enough formally recognised professional development planning in businesses, and employees sometimes feel that they are being left to identify educational options by themselves. Professional education in work is struggling to match the aspirations of employers and employees. A more considered learning framework, supported by better assessment methodologies, may significantly increase the relevance and impact of professional education activity.

Learners are misinformed

Learners often make poor choices around educational progression, partly due to a disconnection between education and industry.

There are certain areas of study that are hugely oversubscribed, leaving too many qualified individuals fighting for a small number of jobs. Also, learners might pursue what they believe to be a high-potential educational pathway, only to discover that the qualification has little value in the labour market. The value of specific qualifications can often be related to the issue of relevance. But, while employers may know how relevant a specific qualification is, learners often do not. There can be a distinct lack of applicable knowledge available to them when they start work.

There should be better general guidance for prospective employees, including guidance on the knowledge, skills and behaviours that should be developed. There should also be more specific advice within certain sectors about the quality and relevance of the qualifications that are on offer.



The majority of employers find it difficult to assess candidates' soft skills and therefore find it most difficult to find candidates with appropriate leadership skills, able to multi-task and with the right level of commitment to the role.

Source: Edexcel research 2008

Maximising impact

Low status of professional education

Learners often still believe that academic education is of greater value than professional qualifications, even though industry is increasingly saying that academia does not address the skills of modern economies or adequately prepare people for the workplace.

Historically, professional study is 'where you end up if you cannot make it academically'. In some countries there is even a sense of shame attached to attending a vocational college. And, in emerging economies where educational opportunity is still a privilege, learners automatically look towards the 'top' of the educational hierarchy and will try and secure a place at the best academic institution. This fulfils their aspirations and those of their family.

The standards of professional education content and teaching must be raised in order to change public perception. There should be a focus on the value of knowledge, skills and behaviours and the way these qualities can help an individual do the job. Employers have a key role to play. If the ultimate objective for those entering further and higher education is to secure a good job, employers need to communicate the value they attach to such education. They also need to be more involved in the design and delivery of course content.

Additionally, there needs to be a re-evaluation by both employers and learners of what academic study offers. It is not uncommon to see examples of academic qualifications that are becoming much more work-focused but this needs to be made more widespread.

Best practice is not shared or celebrated

There are many examples of incredibly successful policies, initiatives and projects that educate and nurture highly skilled, talented individuals. Every country in this project had positive stories to tell.

We need to create opportunities where practical experiences can be openly shared. It is important to learn from each other's successes and failures. We should celebrate success more openly and vocally than we do currently.

Best practice is not scaled-up effectively

Having identified examples of best practice, there is often a failure to scale-up these initiatives effectively.

Limited measurement of impact

We need to have better ways of assessing the impact of education programmes and initiatives so we can place a value on them. There should be incentives for sharing between businesses and across international boundaries.

Scaling-up often involves a multi-agency approach. Relationships need to be built between relevant stakeholders in order to facilitate wider roll out.

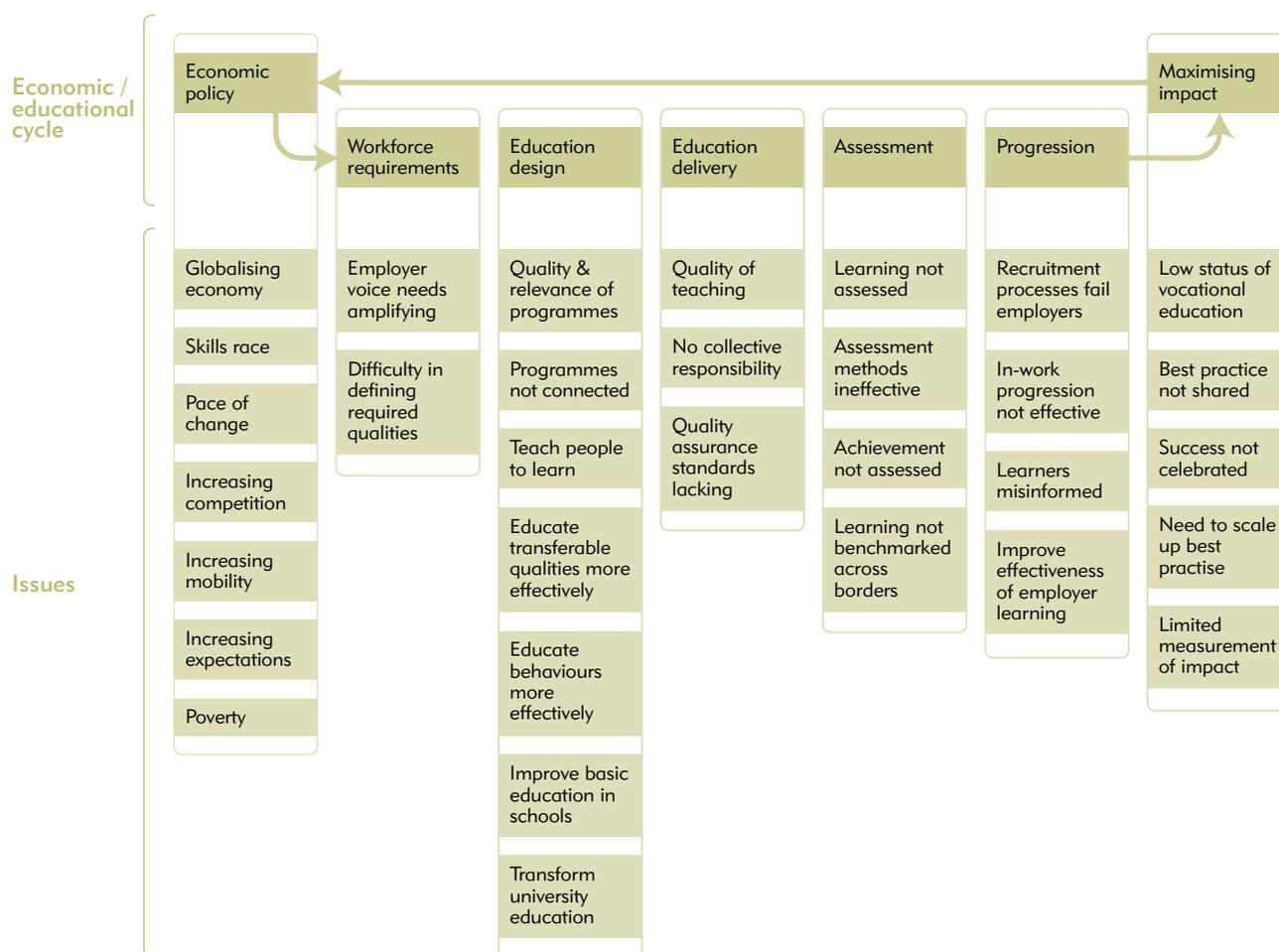
Figure 3 gives an overview of the challenges identified during our research. It maps these to the various stages of economic and educational progression that typically exist within an economy.



Defined at an individual level, few companies formally profile the ideal employee.

Source: Edexcel research 2008

Figure 3: Findings: global issues



Qualities valued by employers

A Goldman Sachs thesis in 2003 introduced Brazil, Russia, India and China (BRIC) as four emerging economies which, by 2050, would eclipse most of today's richest nations. Chapters 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 focus on these four economies as well as South Africa and the United Arab Emirates.

For each of these in-depth studies we introduce the concept of 'qualities valued by employers'. Here we list the common qualities employers have said they are looking for in job candidates and employees. We hope that being clear about these qualities will give a clearer understanding of the importance of effective education for employment. It will also offer a useful skills focus for governments, industry, educators, learners and employees.

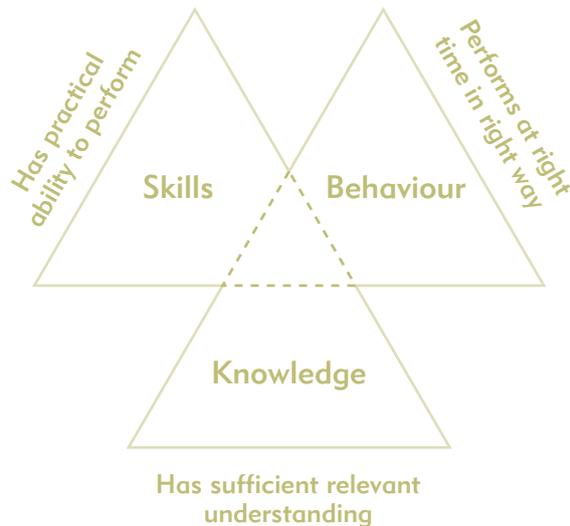
The concept

Employers typically expect employees to have:

- **knowledge:** sufficient relevant information to perform a job role
- **skills:** the practical ability to perform a job role effectively
- **behaviours:** the aptitude to perform what needs doing at the right time and in the right way.

Refer to Figure 4 on the following page.

Figure 4: Qualities valued by employers concept



6 in 10 employers reference a profile of an ideal employee when recruiting/developing staff.

Source: Edexcel research 2008

We call such groupings of knowledge, skills and behaviours 'qualities'. We can define a set of qualities relevant to any person, in any job, in any industry and in any country.

Feedback from research groups

The concept of qualities valued by employers was referenced at each of the round-table meetings and in primary research questionnaires. The response was universally positive.

Although many of those taking part initially felt that it was impossible to identify a set of generic attributes that would be valuable for any job in any sector, with further exploration it became clear that this is indeed possible. In fact, one of the most striking findings across the whole of the research was the commonality of these transferable qualities. They include:

- problem solving
- positive thinking
- creativity/innovation
- trust
- leadership and management
- multi-tasking
- initiative
- accepting responsibility
- team working
- sustainability
- empathy
- communication/languages
- professional manner
- cultural sensitivity.



Chapter 3

Country report: Brazil

Chapter 3 Country report: Brazil

/// It is much better to motivate, promote and develop existing employees. A motivated worker will perform better. ///

Employer, Brazil

Overview

The economy

Brazil's economy is dominated by the service industry and enlarged further by strong agricultural and industrial sectors. Science and technology is also a significant strength, and this is attracting record foreign investment. According to the Brazilian government, the country's economy growth rate was running at 6.8% of gross domestic product (GDP) during 2008.

The workforce

The size of Brazil's workforce was estimated to be around 102 million in 2008 with unemployment running at around 7.6%. It is estimated that around 23.5% of the population still live below the poverty line.

Education

Education system reform began to take hold during the 1960s and 1970s, with a move from education for the elite to education for all. Although this change has continued to gather pace during the last 20 years, the common criticism is that the quality of the education has dropped.

There are significant issues around primary and secondary education, and this inevitably impacts on the success and effectiveness of tertiary (third-level) education and the subsequent feed of talent into the labour market. The economy has seen a rapid growth in the demand for jobs but the popular view from business is that there are not enough applicants who are sufficiently qualified and appropriately skilled.

Over the last decade, there has been an explosion of higher education institutions – many of them run privately, and particularly in the health sector. The increase in the number of students in higher and further education is a positive improvement but focus is beginning to shift towards what is being taught and the quality and methodology of the teaching. In recent years, professional education programmes have focused specifically on health and government. There has also been a heavy investment in the 'up-skilling' of teachers.

Professional education

There are well-established mechanisms to encourage and support professional education in Brazil. Worker organisations participate in the Consejo Deliberativo del Fondo de Asistencia al Trabajador (CODEFAT) – Deliberative Council of the Workers' Assistance Fund. CODEFAT administers the Fondo de Asistencia al Trabajador (FAT or Workers' Assistance Fund), which is the largest public fund in the country. FAT resources come from a 1% deduction on company payrolls, and part of this money funds the policies and objectives of the national system of employment. This includes job centres, unemployment insurance,

vocational retraining, information on unemployment and programmes to generate employment and income.

The National Commercial Training Service (SENAC) is a vocational training institution that operates as a private institution and is funded by financial contributions from commercial enterprises. Its aim is to promote and support vocational training programmes among diversified audiences, with the aim of developing skills and creating qualified individuals for the labour market. Its activities and policies are guided by national social and economic problems. Work is focused on seven sectors (administration, communication and arts, the tourism and hotel industry, health, fashion and beauty, preservation and maintenance, and informatics) and the institution engages in defining the basic skills requirements for different occupations in each of these sectors. According to its own figures, the institution has trained more than 23 million professionals.

Adding to the work of SENAC is the Serviço Nacional de Aprendizagem Industrial (SENAI), which translates as the National Service of Industrial Learning. This operates as a network of not-for-profit, secondary-level professional schools that are maintained by the Brazilian Confederation of Industry. SENAI provides formal training for specialised workers in industry – specifically in chemistry, mechanics and construction. SENAI has 744 operational units across Brazil, offering more than 1,800 courses. It was set up in the 1950s as part of an integrated social action system, founded by political leaders in collaboration with industry.

Brazil has a history of supporting apprenticeship schemes. 15-17 year olds can join a two-year programme with employers on the Young Apprentice Scheme. This widely adopted initiative is considered to be highly successful. In fact, the rate of conversion from apprenticeships to full-time employment is estimated at around 70%.

Comment

The initiatives outlined above strongly indicate a history of commitment to professional education and a recent revitalisation of the structures and approaches that accompanied the election of President Lula da Silva in 2002. However, many argue that the successful revitalisation of the Brazilian economy has not been matched by an improvement in professional education provision. While current structures provide a basis for engagement between industry and education, and their funding is compulsory, there are still familiar criticisms towards the effectiveness of these structures.

Quality and relevance of professional education are key issues. Also, the status of vocational study is low in comparison to academic study. In general, there is a sense that professional education needs further reform in order to support the continuing growth of the economy.

There is no doubt about the demand for professional training and education. In itself, professional training and education is seen as a huge growth sector within the Brazilian economy, with e-learning seeing significant expansion – reflecting Brazil's recent accelerated uptake of computer technology. Brazilians are also extremely keen to improve their English language skills to increase their level of global competitiveness and educational opportunity.

/// We will need better people in 10 years time; this will be about the demands of the market place. ///

Employer, Brazil

Key emerging themes

The following themes reflect the principal areas of focus during the round-table meetings and accompanying research.

Improving education standards

There has been a notable expansion of educational opportunity at every level in Brazil. However, many indicators suggest that standards of education have not been maintained.

The expansion of educational institutions has been driven primarily by the private sector – particularly within further and higher education. In some cases, it could be argued that commercial institutions will be driven more by profit than by the quality or relevance of their educational provision.

There are no consistent standards of quality assurance. This creates confusion for employers and learners who want to rate the relative value of providers and content. Having a significant proportion of the young population engaged in tertiary education is certainly a good starting point. But, without improving quality, the positive impact of mass participation is negated.

Improving basic skills

Basic skills teaching at primary and secondary level is still a prominent challenge in Brazil. Investment in infrastructure and teacher training has been significant but the effects of this investment are only beginning to be felt. Currently, more than 50% of children are failing against basic literacy and numeracy measurements. Without raising these standards, it will be difficult to improve the quality of entrants to higher and further education, and education programmes will struggle to expand and succeed.

Offering greater support for education in business

There is an increasing tendency for businesses to assume the role of training provider, though many businesses see this as an uncomfortable burden. For businesses to stay competitive in the globalised economy there needs to be greater support for educational activity in businesses and, more pertinently, an improved public system of professional education.

Creating better ways to share knowledge

There needs to be better ways for businesses to share knowledge and expertise within sectors and more open channels of communication between business and education. The Ministry of Education has just begun to discuss industry needs. However, the Federation of Industry, which represents business interests in Brazil, does not have a role in defining professional education, both in terms of the curriculum or defining the skills needs of industry.

Improving the perception of professional education

Companies are starting to realise the value of vocational study and question the relevance of some academic education. However, there is still the perception that businesses recruit primarily on the basis of academic achievement despite the fact that this is not necessarily a good indicator of a candidate's ability to do a job. This is as much a cultural challenge as a challenge pertaining to quality and relevance.

Perceptions of professional education also relate to the respect or esteem in which certain professions are held. The notion still exists that

It is easy to determine what we are looking for in candidates, the hard thing is to find the right ones.

Employer, Brazil

you are 'nothing' if you are not a lawyer, doctor or engineer, though this is beginning to change. Jobs in the services sector are seen as increasingly important. Skilled roles in the catering industry are another good example of jobs that are now viewed with a much greater respect.

Progression routes into employment still represent a key issue that impacts on the perceived value of vocational education. Perceived value needs to change alongside intrinsic value or any improvements in quality may be disregarded. The value of training and education must be more clearly articulated.

Improving the relevance of university education

Much of the expansion in the Brazilian education system has happened across higher-level academic study. The enthusiasm for privately funded universities reflects the esteem in which academic study is held and signifies the aspiration to pursue academic study. While there are general issues of quality throughout the education system, the specific challenge for universities is to make courses more relevant to the world of work. There is a sense that university education does not teach people how to think and there is not enough applicable knowledge. While professional education certainly needs to improve, Brazil's academic institutions also need to reform teaching methods and engage students more in practical, experiential learning.

Focusing on attitude and behaviour

There is a commonly held perception that individuals entering the job market lack the right attitude. A good example is that of the nursing profession. The health sector has seen huge investment in skills development. But, while many new nurses may be able to carry out their tasks technically, they often lack the behaviours and attitudes towards patients and colleagues that would make them more effective.

At the moment there is a bottleneck in the health sector, with many patients travelling from overseas to use Brazil's system. Staff development and recruitment has filled some of the immediate demand but many technicians are ill-prepared for patient-facing roles and lack cultural sensitivity. In some cases, even basic communication skills are deficient. This is recognised as a serious problem and one that actually affects clinical efficiency.

We must come to the conclusion that attitudes and behaviours are not being taught or nurtured effectively. It is also extremely difficult to measure attitudes and values effectively, particularly when recruitment is typically focused around interviews. Many companies lack the framework to assess these attributes among existing staff or at recruitment. Most would also acknowledge that it is much easier to instil knowledge through education than attitudes and behaviours. This is a task that professional education needs to address.

Low self-esteem

Another problem that relates to the issue of attitude is the prevalence of low self-esteem among young people. The reasons are complex and not easily defined. Increasingly, there is a significant divide between the rich and the poor in Brazil. And, while the lifestyle and achievements of Brazil's economic winners could be seen as inspirational and probably are to some, there are still significant levels of poverty. There is therefore some way to go before issues around equality and opportunity (both educational and economic) are addressed.

Low self-esteem affects a number of things – primarily, ambition and

*/// Everyone says
they're very keen! ///*

Employer, Brazil

the ability to learn. Dealing with this problem is not simple and requires attention at every level of education as well as in the workplace.

Creating a perception of ongoing education

Most employers look for individuals who have the ability to learn and wish to pursue learning throughout their career. However, evidence suggests that there isn't a culture of continuous learning in Brazil. 'Short-termism' is an endemic problem (i.e. people want things now rather than investing for the future). The long-term value of education is not appreciated and, in some ways, the rapid economic successes of the past decade have created a culture of immediate expectation. If individuals are to reach their potential in education and in work, there needs to be a greater sense of personal and professional development.

Building on the positives

Compared to many other countries, Brazil has extremely well-developed structures to support skills development. Brazil is also one of the few countries to make it compulsory for business to engage in funding professional education programmes and related initiatives. This is achieved through the FAT scheme (Workers' Assistance Fund).

Not everyone will agree that the FAT scheme is effective but there is arguably an inherent value placed on skills development when taxation is applied and directed in this way. As with many government initiatives, particularly of this size, there will always be failures in the system. But building on these structures represents a positive way forward for the Brazilian government and businesses.

SENACs are seen to be valuable in promoting skills like customer service. The organisation is currently developing a customer service training programme for taxi drivers, something that will only be possible if the organisational structures are in place to support it.

Qualities valued by employers in Brazil

- Adaptability
- The ability to apply their knowledge in a real work situation
- The ability to problem solve
- Communication skills
- Pride in work
- Self-esteem to support progression
- A good attitude
- Professional maturity
- Valuing work and enjoying it
- An understanding of how their organisation can help them progress
- Operational intelligence
- Initiative
- Self-awareness - knowing one's strengths and limitations
- Good humour

/// If you have the right experience but not the right personality it is no good. When problems arise you will need to be ready to deal with those. It's a matter of attitude. ///

Employee, Brazil

- Relationship skills
- Innovation
- Motivation
- The ability to manage peers, teams and processes
- Decision making skills
- Engagement and commitment
- A results-oriented outlook
- Respectful of others (within company and in the wider world)
- Attuned to the company's objectives
- A happy professional - one who likes themselves
- A sense of responsibility
- Receptive (to others and change)
- A willingness to grow

Conclusions

Demographics

Brazil's current economic strength and growth potential relates, in part, to its demographic: a youthful population of over 183 million. It is a wealthy nation in human resource terms.

Education provision

For many years there has been a push to make education accessible to all. This has reaped significant successes but further improvements are possible.

The standard of education provision is mixed at every level, from primary to postgraduate. Having created the educational opportunities, government, industry and education should now focus on raising and maintaining standards. There should be greater emphasis on quality assurance and a significant focus on qualification design and delivery.

Professional education

Professional education already plays a significant role in providing Brazil with the workforce it needs but improvement is possible. Businesses and education providers could work more closely to define the need and design solutions. Some structures are already in place to facilitate this.

The image of Brazil's public professional education strategy could be improved by building on existing initiatives and strengthening its connection with industry.

Brazil is witnessing a lot of good work in the area of professional education. There should be more opportunities to publicise successful cases. As well as offering a greater sense of pride, businesses, educators and policy makers can learn how to increase their impact on learners, employees and the Brazilian economy itself.

Transferable qualities

There is a clear need to address general skills – in particular, behaviours and attitudes. This should happen at every level of education as well as

It is important to be given a certificate for your training. A guy with a certificate is looked at differently from one without a certificate.

Employee, Brazil

in the workplace. Professional education programmes should reflect the need for a more generalised curriculum that allows individuals greater mobility within the country's economy.

New mechanisms should help businesses and organisations assess personal attributes like attitude, behaviour and cultural awareness. Industry can set the standard. But to do this, industry must be clear about the attributes potential employees need to demonstrate.



Chapter 4

Country report: China



Chapter 4 Country report: China

“In general, we are stressing this concept “the company cares and loves her employees and employees, in turn, love the company.” This is culture construction.”

Employer, China

Overview

The economy

China has been one of the fastest growing major economies in the world over the last five years. It is one of the world's biggest exporters and the country maintains a huge trade surplus. In fact, the transformation currently taking place has been described as a 'second industrial revolution'.

Beyond the requirements of the manufacturing and construction industries, President Hu Jintao stated in 2006 that he wanted to move from 'made in China' recognition around the world to one of 'designed in China'. It is clear, therefore, that he believes long-term economic strength lies as much in the knowledge economy as it did in the sectors that China now dominates.

The workforce

Many workforce challenges have been created by the pace of economic change and the encouragement of private enterprise. Among them is a growing need for better skilled, more flexible workers. The migration of rural populations to growing industrial cities in the east has also created its own challenges. The global economic downturn, and its impact on China's manufacturing and construction industries, has created an even greater need for a more diverse workforce.

Education

To realise its vision, China requires an education system that supports and nurtures creativity and innovation, one that can develop the imagination and talent of the country's future business leaders. Demand for skills development has increased exponentially but structural and procedural changes have been slow to filter down.

Professional education

During the mid-to-late 1990s, the Chinese government began significant reforms in the professional education sector with the aim of strengthening the impact and reach of vocational study. The government's own figures suggest a degree of success. Between 1980 and 2001, the proportion of secondary vocational school students increased from 19% to 45.3% and secondary vocational education institutions produced around 50 million graduates.

The World Bank recognises that China has made substantial efforts to modernise their technical and vocational education programmes. China currently has the largest structure of vocational education programmes in the world (in terms of number of graduates). In spite of this reform though, there is still a significant gap between policy and practice. The numbers passing through the system are increasing, though many feel the overall quality of education is poor. And graduate successes

in finding work seem to be more reflective of demand rather than the quality of available skills or employer satisfaction.

Professional education is a strategic priority in the government's 11th Five-Year Plan, published in 2006. Its stated objectives are to improve quality and relevance, encourage greater links between education and industry, provide greater access to students on low incomes and diversify the sources of training. This strategy is already creating significant opportunities in the commercial education market but quality is still a considerable problem.

The regulation of public vocational education institutions is an issue. Providers have very limited powers to change course content as government guidelines typically dictate the subjects that are taught, the time spent on each subject and the general construction of the curriculum. This makes it more difficult for institutions to innovate.

Key emerging themes

The following themes reflect the principal areas of focus during the provocation meetings and accompanying research.

Traditional methods of teaching still dominate

There is a vast process of modernisation happening across China. It is being driven by business and industry, and can be seen first-hand in the huge infrastructure projects being undertaken to support the blossoming economy.

Modernisation has been slower to reach the education system, however. Teaching is based on traditional didactic, classroom-based learning, even though practical and experiential-style facilities are available. This approach impacts at every level. Employers commonly complain that new recruits do not have the ability to apply the knowledge they have learnt from the classroom. Classroom-based learning also provides fewer opportunities for developing soft skills and creativity.

Work experience opportunities are scarce

Employers and training providers recognise the need for some practical engagement as part of the learning experience. But, while there are some examples of this, there is little interaction between education and business in this area.

The reasons for this are mixed. To an extent, the cultural and historical norms in the education system work against providing experiential learning opportunities. There are no structures or policies to support this type of interaction; there is a general cynicism from business towards this kind of engagement; and, while internships and apprenticeships are familiar, there isn't an appetite for the approach.

This is explained, in part, by the challenges of staff retention and the realities of a newly mobile workforce. Businesses are enthusiastic about the idea of finding a graduate and helping them build on their abilities but loyalty to one company seems to be less common among the general workforce. Businesses are therefore wary of investing time and resources in individuals who will move on. Without better ways to generate more practical learning experiences, however, the ability of new recruits to do their jobs effectively will continue to be a problem.

New workforce expectations

Young people's expectations and aspirations have changed with the

“The employees should hold affection for the company so that both develop.”

Employer, China

“Their ability, in general, is good since they are newly-grads. But they don't work hard enough. Lack of spirit, I shall say.”

Employer, China

growth in the economy. The explosion of opportunity has broadened the aspirations of those leaving education. This is a positive thing, of course, but it has also created a significantly more mobile workforce who is increasingly aware of its market worth and consequently lacks loyalty to its employers.

Research participants believed that attitudes towards employers had changed in recent years. New employees expect a good salary and to be given responsibility. There is often a lack of humility and an absence of a strong work ethic. It is hard to say whether this is connected to heightened aspirations, the result of a broader cultural dynamic, or both. But, whatever the case, the perception is that today's employees have lost the respect for work that prevailed in previous generations. Whether education can address these issues, and how it might begin to do this, is an interesting debate.

A need for improved recruitment methods

Businesses must identify the skills they need and find them quickly in the market. There are indications that Human Relations (HR) departments typically don't have the sufficient capacity to recruit the right people, though. Current recruitment methods are considered to be outdated, and recruiters are commonly described as 'not sufficiently skilled' to identify appropriate candidates. There is an increasing trend towards outsourcing HR/recruitment facilities – particularly in larger organisations. And, although outsourcing may be seen as cost effective, it does create further distance between the employer and future employees.

No mechanisms to assess soft skills

Soft skills are becoming increasingly important for many jobs in the new economy but existing recruitment approaches do not seem to be assessing soft skills in candidates. There are also no significant mechanisms to match recent graduates with available jobs. With such a vast and expanding workforce, it will be vital to improve the communication between what employers need and what the workforce has to offer.

No employer voice

It is critical for industry to play an active role in creating effective professional education programmes in China, as it is everywhere else. However, employers are not sufficiently engaged in the delivery of education in order to define human resource needs, identify skills requirements and assist in the design of professional education content. The formal mechanisms that do exist between employers and educators are not viewed as successful. And, crucially, there is not enough ongoing dialogue between industry and the Ministry of Education. While it is generally accepted that educational policy and curriculum design should be driven by the needs of business and society, this is not currently the case.

Without improving channels of communication, education will not successfully deliver appropriately skilled individuals to fulfil China's skills requirements.

The emphasis on academia

Professional education still has a poor image in comparison to academic study. While this reflects the situation globally, it is perhaps more acutely felt in China. Academic achievement is still the most aspirational choice. It is generally believed that an academic education will provide the most likely route to a good job, and also that vocational study, in some way,

/// [We look for candidates who are] physically fit and [have] good learning skills. And [are] conscientious. ///

Employer, China

represents educational failure.

The situation was compounded in June 2007 when the government issued the 'No. 14 Guideline', which explicitly discouraged universities from running vocational programmes. Ironically, employers are becoming disillusioned with the value of academic study, preferring an education based around the skills needed to perform a job. No one currently wants to be a part of the vocational education system, though, whether this is for reasons of quality or culture.

The emphasis on gaining a certificate

Gaining a certificate seems to be the primary reason to join an education programme, particularly amongst learners and employees.

Not surprisingly, employers are beginning to challenge this idea because of the mismatch between certified educational achievement and the candidates' ability to actually do a job. The perceived value of certificates does vary between accrediting authorities but many courses and providers do not deliver necessary quality to justify employer trust.

Lack of policy direction

The research suggests that there could be a clearer direction for China's skills strategy. Policies covering vocational education have only been in place over the last 10 years, and there is now a great need for more government investment in the relevant programmes. There should also be more activity to bridge the gap between industry and education providers.

Qualities valued by employers in China

- Encouraging to others
- Brings humour to the workplace
- An ability and willingness to learn
- Showing commitment beyond the cause
- Able and willing to help others
- Fosters positive relationships with colleagues
- An ability to understand his or her environment and appreciate boundaries
- Multi-skilled – someone who can work in different ways

Conclusions

Demographics

The growth of China's economy is creating an unprecedented demand for skilled workers, which means the challenges facing education and industry are vast. Economic growth has not yet been stifled by an education system that may need some modernisation.

Education provision

China is attracting record levels of foreign investment, and global corporations are bringing their own educational programmes and staff into the country. However, there must be long-term investment and a clear skills development strategy for the country to maintain its economic

“ Interpersonal communication skills, expression skills and working attitude are only revealed at work. ”

Employer, China

profile, as well as ensuring the economy can diversify on the basis of native talent – a stated objective of President Hu Jintao.

A significant part of this strategy should be focused on teaching and learning approaches so they gain a much greater practical relevance. Beyond this, there needs to be greater emphasis on developing and implementing robust approaches for defining skills needs and professional education programmes. This must focus on a number of key objectives – primarily, the relationship between government, education and industry.

There are operational models adopted in other countries. Brazil and South Africa both have mechanisms to facilitate this interaction. And, while these approaches could perhaps be improved, they do represent grounded, long-term commitments to dialogue and a collective responsibility on workforce development. This interaction would help in articulating the need and developing relevant curricula in China. It would also improve the correlation between supply and demand, and may help businesses develop better methods for recruitment.

// Work attitude is most important for junior workers. //

Employer, China

Professional education

The quality and status of professional education programmes need to be enhanced. The market is crowded and fragmented, and there are no leading brands currently delivering high-quality professional education courses. There needs to be a better quality assessment of qualifications and providers for quality standards to rise and to help businesses place a value on the range of qualifications being delivered.

By raising standards and committing to a strategic plan, professional education can become the basis for an even greater economic miracle.



Chapter 5

Country report: India

Chapter 5 Country report: India

/// The company gave me the opportunity to prove myself for six or seven days. They found that I was hardworking and my mind was good and that is what they wanted so they recruited me. ///

Employee, India

Overview

The economy

India sits at the forefront of the new economic paradigm. It is one of the fastest growing major economies in the world, with GDP growth running at 9% in 2007. Set against this is an estimated population living below the poverty line of over 27% in 2008.

The workforce

The speed of growth is placing huge demands on the Indian education system. It will have to develop an appropriately skilled workforce that can meet the ever-changing human resource requirements industry is creating. Paradoxically, economic growth has not been matched by employment opportunities, with fears that India could be witnessing jobless growth. The Boston Consulting Group and US Standard Bureau recently published figures predicting a global deficit in trained manpower by 2020. By this time, it is estimated that India will have a surplus of about 47 million skilled workers.

Education

The Indian government recently committed itself to raising public investment in education (from 3.7% of GDP in 2008 to 6% by 2025). A National Skills Development Mission was also launched in 2007 with the aim of creating 1,600 new industrial training institutes and polytechnics, 10,000 new vocational schools and 50,000 new skill development centres. These are ambitious targets that demonstrate an awareness of the need for significant change. Consequently India is fast becoming a global hub for talent.

It is extremely difficult, if not impossible, for an education system to respond to these challenges quickly and in the right ways – particularly in a country as large and as diverse as India. The education system is struggling to address significant issues around basic skills as well as the challenge of moving a predominantly rural workforce from agricultural to industrial activities. A World Bank report in 2006 stated that, while the number of individuals with some education had risen over the preceding five years, educational attainment remained low overall in comparison to other countries. Figures suggest that only around one school-leaver in five has the necessary skills to get a job, and the figure for university graduates is one in four.

Some changes are taking place in further and higher education where the focus is more on educating for employment. But this change is slow and, as a consequence, business and industry are increasingly operating in a 'parallel universe' to education. They are assuming responsibility for the development and up-skilling of their workforce in total isolation from the formal structures of public education.

Vocationally trained individuals currently represent around 5% of the

total Indian workforce. There are currently plans to increase this figure to 50% by 2021.

The years of colonialism are considered to have left a broadly positive legacy – in particular, the embedding of the English language into education. But the administrative systems are largely based on a traditional British framework, and this creates problems. Within this framework, there is an emphasis on ‘top’ academic institutions and considerably less prestige and focus on non-academic studies. There is some evidence that the relative employer demand for technically/ vocationally qualified candidates has actually fallen over the last decade. This is partly due to the poor quality (or poor-quality perception) of the training that is provided. There is a lack of belief from employers towards such qualifications.

Even so, a vast and expanding education market is being created in India because of current economic and demographic trends and significant increase in government spending. The current education market is estimated to be worth around \$46 billion with \$17 billion of this being private spend. The specific market for vocational education and training is currently estimated at \$1 billion.

Professional education

Addressing vocational education is seen as one way to stimulate job creation and meet current skill demands. India has a strong history of positive policies and activity around vocational education. But feedback received suggested many public schemes lack relevance and employer respect. As a consequence, the impact on the workforce is minimal.

The vocational education stream in India is comparatively small, with less than 3% of students at upper secondary level enrolling in courses. In fact, India’s vocational education institutions are running at considerably less than their available capacity, illustrating the challenge the country faces in changing perceptions and raising standards. Furthermore, a large number of people who take vocational education programmes do so as a stepping stone to further educational progression, rather than to enter the labour market. In part, this reflects the poor employment opportunities for those leaving vocational programmes.

While these issues are still problematic, they should not obscure the value of some of the initiatives being run in India’s vocational stream. There are a variety of programmes aimed at improving employment opportunities in general as well as providing a balanced education that better matches the requirements of the workplace. There is also some focus on self-employment as a desirable outcome.

The Apprentice Training Scheme was launched in the late 1950s as part of India’s vocational programme. In 2004, around 168,000 apprentices were placed across public and private sector organisations, according to government figures. This was only a moderate increase in numbers from five years before, which is another clear indication of a system with significant additional capacity – only 68% of available apprenticeships were taken up in 2004.

Key emerging themes

The following themes reflect the principal areas of focus during the round-table meetings and accompanying research.

“On the job [training] is best because you learn more.”

Employee, India

“The biggest challenge we face is that there’s no talent – the talent pool is really dry.”

Employer, India



Over a third of learners in India have no contact with employers during their studies.

Source: Edexcel research 2008

Creating a culture of learning

It is vitally important for learners and employees to have a passion for self-development. It is unreasonable to expect education to provide individuals with all the technical and functional skills employers need as they change so rapidly. If employees are able and keen to learn, businesses are often happy to take on the burden of training.

The increasing role of women

Women are playing an increasingly vital role in meeting the skills demands of business and industry in India. They are also considered to be stronger than men in some of the soft skills areas that are so vital, for example team building, leadership and communication. This trend is particularly noticeable in service-oriented sectors.

Business leading the design and delivery of education

There are a number of reasons why businesses are increasingly becoming educators. The education system in India is generally viewed as being ineffective, bureaucratic and over-regulated. The only way to fill the talent gap is for businesses to educate people themselves. It means they can design the teaching programme; they also have greater access to the right tools and technologies and can offer a much more productive learning environment (i.e. the workplace).

There are some issues, though. Levels of investment and work vary across sectors and companies. Also, many of these qualifications are not currently certified, which means it is difficult for employees to exploit the value of their qualification outside the company where they learnt them. Furthermore, companies will inevitably focus on harder skills that are specific to the job at hand rather than developing vital soft skills.

The value of certified education and training

A lot of education (particularly vocational) is seen as too theoretical with not enough of a connection to the workplace. Employers can be suspicious of the value of a particular qualification as it may not be a good measure of whether the individual can do a job. There are also few high-quality courses in specialised areas such as gaming or animation, which means these types of skills either need to be taught from scratch by employers or individuals need to go overseas.

The cross-cultural challenges of the new economy

Rapid growth and unprecedented change has created some new cultural issues. For example, the significant increase of women in management-level roles has caused some issues in sections of (male) society where it is not acceptable for men to be 'subservient' to women. There is therefore a general need to develop more managers who have the ability and sensitivity to deal with cross-cultural issues.

Focusing on the creative, ideas and knowledge economy

It is generally accepted that India needs more 'knowledge workers' and that, for economic growth to continue at current levels, there should be a greater emphasis on creativity and innovation. These skills are in extremely short supply and, while the need to develop such skills is clear, what is less clear is the extent to which these skills are successfully being taught through education. India needs to equip itself more effectively in order to develop and exploit this new emphasis on 'cognitive capital'.

The perishable nature of skills values

The sheer pace of change in the Indian economy is forcing people to rethink the way professional education is designed. There is a sense

that the traditional pathways from education to work no longer apply. Individuals change careers throughout their working lives, and the requirements within a particular role also change regularly. There is, therefore, a need to retrain continually in order to 'top up' required skills. This situation may necessitate different types of training courses – perhaps shorter 'nano-training' - which can be accessed whenever it is needed and delivered in a flexible and personalised way.

The value of soft skills but a difficulty in measuring them

Vital elements in the ongoing development of the workforce include good communication skills, the ability to work in a team, confidence in your own ideas and the capability and attitude to continuously learn. However, there is some debate around soft skills, how (and even if) these skills can be taught, where this teaching should take place and how skills can be measured and certified. There is a notion that the employer should not necessarily be the one to develop basic soft skills in employees but that one of the best places to develop such skills is on-the-job. Also, respondents stated that it is often difficult to know whether a recruitment candidate has these skills. The skills are difficult to test, and there is little in the way of certified training to prove a candidate has them.

The lack of talented managers

The rapid expansion in business numbers and size across India has led to an increase in demand for management-level individuals. Individuals who may have taken 10 years or more to progress in an organisation now reach the level of middle or senior management much quicker. Managers are younger than ever and, as a consequence, they often lack the necessary experience.

Qualities valued by employers in India

- High aspirations
- A sense of responsibility for oneself and others
- The right applicable domain knowledge
- An ability to handle information, extract meaning and make decisions
- A desire to learn
- Visual communication and observation skills - recognising visual clues, body language
- Creative and innovative
- A great team worker
- Precision and accuracy in work
- The ability to multi-task
- Honesty and integrity
- The ability to have ideas and communicate them



The ability to work in a team was highest ranked amongst Indian employers as the characteristic that they will need to develop in their employees over the next five years. It was also identified as one of the hardest skills to identify when recruiting new staff.

Source: Edexcel research 2008

/// It's very important for me as an employer to find candidates who have learnt how to learn. ///

Employer, India

Conclusions

Demographics

Globalisation has given the Indian economy and its population a huge surge of energy, enthusiasm and opportunity. But, while the country's ability to compete across sectors remains bright, the economy is still affected by the global shortage of skilled labour. The process of upskilling workers is as significant a challenge as developing high-quality new entrants for industry.

Education provision

The education system is receiving significant resources, from primary school through to secondary and tertiary education. Government and industry acknowledge that long-term investment in professional education is crucial to the growth and stability of the economy. But it is also a daunting task. The Indian education system is attempting to address huge challenges around basic skills, which arguably present a more acute problem than that of educating people who are already further up the academic ladder.

In terms of delivering a sufficiently skilled workforce, there must be quicker action and more conviction, a deregulation of further and higher education provision and new teaching methods, new curricula and new models of development and delivery.

Businesses currently have to play a far greater role in educating the workforce than ever before. This has had some significant benefits – the quality and relevance of this in-house training is considered to be very high, and in some niche areas it is providing Indian companies with a perceptible edge. The content of these courses can be continually moderated to fit changing demands. And, because methods are considerably more 'hands on', soft skills are developed and nurtured where class-based learning often fails.

There are downsides to this approach, however. At the moment, activity is delivered in an ad-hoc, voluntary way, and this means it is not scalable to the wider population. In addition, the size and nature of a business will always affect the ability of a business to provide its own training and education.

Professional education

The squeeze on profit margins in some sectors mitigates against the investment that would be required to design and deliver effective education programmes. For small and very small businesses, there often isn't the time or enough staff turnover to justify this kind of in-house training. There are also issues around the portability of these qualifications, as most are not certified within a recognised framework. The teaching quality and the value of the learning from this type of informal qualification may be extremely high, which is ironic considering the common perception of vocational education. But the certificate may mean very little beyond the confines of the organisation.

It is inevitable and desirable that businesses become training institutions in some form or another. Through in-house education programmes and informal apprenticeships, businesses can convert new recruits into valued and valuable staff members. For many businesses, playing this role assures the quality of staff learning and allows them to refine the content of their education to meet ever changing requirements.

Businesses need to become more prominent stakeholders in education for this to be successful and scalable in the long term. This means

increasing the flow of ideas, resources and educational content between the public and private sector. It also means involving employers in the valuing and certification of further and higher education programmes. India can only begin to address its long-term skills demands by bridging the divide between the education system and the business world.

Transferable qualities

Key issues lie around the nature of training and the way in which learning is measured. Firstly, there is a suggestion that shorter training cycles (nano-training) could help to streamline the delivery of professional education.

It's no longer valid for an individual to study a specific curriculum to become qualified for one particular role. New rules of employment require new ways of learning, and it is clear that we need to discover better ways of developing soft skills. Increasing engagement between business and education will help but more needs to be done. Secondly, the way in which we measure the effectiveness of learning needs to be addressed. There is a growing demand for new diagnostic tools that allow educators to understand how successful their teaching is, particularly in relation to the development of soft skills.

/// It is necessary to get inside the company ethos, understand the system and design training accordingly. It is also imperative to get agreement from managers that training is important. ///

Training provider, India

Chapter 6

Country report: South Africa



Chapter 6 Country report: South Africa

Overview

The economy

South Africa is a country of sharp contrasts. While it is the African continent's pre-eminent economic superpower, with an industrialised economy that rivals other developed nations, it also struggles with huge poverty and exhibits many of the characteristics of a developing nation.

The economy has seen consistent growth over the last 10 years, with finance, manufacturing and tourism being particularly strong sectors. However, around a quarter of South Africans are unemployed and economic growth has not resulted in a significant rise in employment opportunities.

The workforce

There is also huge contrast in the make-up of the population. There are 11 officially recognised languages, a mix of religious and tribal beliefs and the most ethnically diverse population in Africa.

Significant opportunities have been created for many South Africans with the end of apartheid and the emergence of democratic rule. The right to a good education and the chance to compete for jobs has inevitably transformed the employment landscape. But apartheid has left a significant legacy in terms of the attitude and self-belief many black South Africans bring to the workplace. The freedom to work and to fulfil ambition is something that is not always easy for black South Africans to embrace. There is a strong belief that this is changing among younger South Africans who have grown up in the post-apartheid era but the impact is still deep and wide-reaching.

Education

The South African government has articulated a clear vision for the future of South Africa, which involves sustained economic growth, a fairer distribution of wealth and education and employment for all. To achieve this, it is clear that education programmes must develop the right skills, knowledge and behaviours to support businesses and society as a whole.

Professional education

Some significant steps have been made. Investment has been poured into the schools system and a number of administrative bodies have been established to address the specific professional education needs of the burgeoning South African economy, following significant strategic development work in the early 1990s.

One of the main bodies is the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), whose primary objectives are to oversee the development of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and ensure that it is implemented and its standards are maintained. The SAQA defines the



Around 80% of employees think it's important to be able to show evidence of learning (i.e. a certificate).

Source: Edexcel research 2008

// ...who is doing the training, how do they train, do they have the ability to train, are they passionate about what they're doing? //

Employer, RSA

framework as 'a set of principles and guidelines which provide a vision, a philosophical base and an organisational structure for construction of a qualifications system'.

Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) were set up in 2000 to support the work of the SAQA. 27 SETAs cover all work sectors in South Africa and their role is described in the following way:

'Within its own sector, a SETA must develop and implement a skills development plan, be responsible for quality control and pay out development grants.'

Relatively speaking, these initiatives are still being established and it is difficult to assess success accurately. But there is no doubt there is a widespread political commitment to education and skills development, driven by economic and social motives. Perhaps this is the start of a positive long-term infrastructure to deliver a better-skilled workforce that is able to grow and sustain South Africa's economy.

Key emerging themes

The following themes reflect the principal areas of focus during the provocation meetings and accompanying research.

The importance of primary and secondary education

The importance of primary and secondary education cannot be underestimated when considering the success of professional education programmes (by which we are predominantly referring to higher, further or tertiary study). This is particularly true in a country with the socio-economic history of South Africa. The level of basic skills, most notably reading and writing, has to be addressed so tertiary education can concentrate on developing higher skills.

There are still significant problems with the quality and availability of basic education in South Africa. In the long term, this should be the first priority for the government to address. It is estimated that 70% of those currently leaving secondary education do not meet basic numeracy and literacy standards. There are many examples of good schools delivering quality education but standards vary widely between schools.

The challenge of diversity

The celebrated diversity of South Africa's population presents some interesting challenges in terms of workplace integration. It is vital for employees to demonstrate an awareness of and sensitivity to other cultures and religions if business in South Africa is to flourish. New recruits are often considered to be lacking in this regard.

Some diversity issues relate to interaction with authority and hierarchies and the role of women. Managers and business leaders need to play an active role in demonstrating the importance of cross-cultural awareness and respect for hierarchy.

Developing basic workplace etiquette

New recruits who are entering the job market for the first time often lack an understanding of how to behave in the workplace. While employers are often happy to take on the responsibility for up-skilling their workforce, they do expect some core etiquette from the start – for example, how to deal with customers, how to communicate with colleagues, how to answer the phone and personal presentation.

Obviously you need the softer skills to keep your team together, keep them happy, so that you can generate cash.

Employee, RSA

Improving aspiration, motivation and a sense of responsibility

On one level, the challenge for education is simple: to provide individuals with the necessary knowledge and skills to perform adequately in a specific job. However, beneath this lies a more complex matrix of personal and social issues that impact on the ability of new recruits to flourish in work and fulfil their potential.

Many young people have no career ideas or plans for the next five years. In many cases it is simply enough to have a job. But, if being employed is the limit of one's ambition, we should perhaps question whether an individual will be motivated to do his or her job well. There is also the issue of self-worth and entitlement. Many entrants into the job market lack the confidence to take responsibility and to put themselves forward. Culturally, they do not have the impetus to develop a career or develop themselves professionally.

In part, this represents a negative legacy from the many years of apartheid rule. It also reflects cultural values some individuals bring from their upbringing into the workplace. Creative ways need to be found to address these issues so they dissolve over time.

Building discipline and trust

Employers have identified that traditional soft skills (such as communication, leadership and problem solving) are lacking. There is also the more profound issue of trust – specifically, that employees can be trusted to do the job, that they will take responsibility and deliver what they promise.

Trust is related closely to discipline. An individual who has self-discipline will become a trustworthy employee. If you have been schooled in a disciplined environment, for instance, you will carry this attitude into the workplace.

Improving course content and quality

One of the key challenges for South Africa's education system and the business community concerns the design of its qualifications. Like other countries, South Africa is struggling to maintain the relevance of its course content so it keeps pace with the changing demands of business and industry.

Although the SETAs provide a mechanism to design and assess qualifications in a particular sector, there is the perception that business should play a more significant role in course development. Furthermore, there should be increased focus on developing skills for specific roles, over and above the need for generic content.

The relevance of course content connects to a wider issue: that of quality. There is a lack of belief in the value of many qualifications, and this is partly due to an ineffective system of quality assurance. Education and industry need to collaborate to raise the standard of course content and implement a more widely accepted system of quality assurance.

Revitalising the infrastructure

The administrative institutions that were established in the 1990s to support and guide professional education have provided a strong basis for the future. But there is a need to revisit the role of these institutions and to refocus their work.

The structures are fundamentally in place. The SETAs, which are accredited by the SAQA, are viewed as valuable mechanisms by which each sector can identify its skills needs, develop and implement strategy

“The difference between a successful candidate and an unsuccessful candidate is the type of training the individual has undertaken during their career path.”

Employer, RSA

and disburse funding. Some are seen as more effective than others but generally they are viewed as positive.

SAQA's NQF is considered to be a positive and important initiative but it needs to be improved and broadened as some people are losing faith in its effectiveness and relevance.

Overall, work in the 1990s has provided a solid foundation to support communication and engagement across each sector, and it has allowed business to contribute to the development and implementation of professional education strategy. There is no need to reinvent the wheel. By improving what is already there, South Africa will begin to reap the rewards.

*/// As a manager
you should have a
fairly clear idea of
what is required. ///*

Employer, RSA

Qualities valued by employers in South Africa

- A willingness to take ownership of a role
- A sense of responsibility for oneself and others
- An ability to use initiative
- Confidence in his or her abilities
- The capacity to integrate and operate in diverse environments
- A team worker
- The ability to learn from mistakes rather than be defeated by them
- Managers that understand and are sensitive to diversity
- Managers who are good communicators
- Knowledge that is applicable within the workplace
- Role-specific skills
- Problem-solving skills
- Critical thinking
- A leader who can also follow
- Willingness to take risks
- Solidity in the face of adversity
- Adaptability and flexibility
- A willingness to embrace technology
- Passion and enthusiasm
- 'I want to be here' rather than 'I have to be here'
- A strong work ethic – desire to progress and succeed

Conclusions

Demographics

South Africa is in the middle of a long and intense period of social, economic and political change. All three of these elements are encompassed in the drive towards better educating its people.

The democracy that the population now enjoys can only be seen as a positive. However, the transition from apartheid is not without its challenges. Many South Africans are still getting used to their new-found freedom, and some are unsure about how to embrace it. While the South African economy is growing - particularly within the context of Africa as a whole – some other parts of the world are not witnessing a similar economic boom.

Education provision

The demand for skills is not as acute here as it is elsewhere. As aspirations rise, and more young people move through further and higher education, more jobs need to be created so that the belief in the value of education remains. There is already anecdotal evidence that some young people do not believe that education will lead to a job.

There is a drive to change the cultural dynamic in many organisations, particularly in the public sector, and to support the promotion of black workers into more senior positions. The management class in South Africa is still dominated by white males but this is beginning to change. New managers need to learn new skills: how to lead, how to innovate and how to motivate and educate their staff. In fact, a new management culture may develop in South Africa over the coming years – one that acknowledges the complexities of the country's political and social history and, simultaneously, embraces the cultural diversity of its current population.

There are some positive structures in place in the country. The systems developed in the 1990s provide a strong basis for the future. In many ways, the regulatory and accreditation framework that is in place rivals that of developed nations. By acknowledging the need to place businesses at the heart of strategic development, South Africa has a firm foundation to build on. But the need to reform these structures is clear. Strengthening the NQF will increase its value and credibility. It will also support better quality assurance, which will ultimately enhance the general strength of South Africa's professional education programmes.

Before this happens, though, the basic standard of education needs to be addressed. The primary and secondary education system has to improve if the social and economic vision for South Africa is to be realised. The challenge is huge. Progress has been made but there is still a long way to go. There is an opportunity here too; in rebuilding the education system, there is a chance to redefine both the content and the methods of teaching.

Transferable qualities

Considering the need for greater emphasis on soft skills (communication, leadership, critical thinking and confidence), the teaching of these skills and attributes should perhaps begin at school.

/// I think employers have the perception that they can't change attitude so they would rather have someone come in that has the right attitude than try to change that attitude. ///

Employer, RSA

Chapter 7

Country report: United Arab Emirates



Chapter 7 Country report: United Arab Emirates

Overview

The economy

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has one of the fastest-growing economies in the world. Figures suggest that between 2005 and 2006, it had the highest increase in GDP of any country.

Until recently, the economy, strengthened by a strong petrol and gas industry, was pursuing diversification into the manufacturing and services sectors. The unprecedented property boom created significant demand for a skilled and capable workforce. Although the fall in the price of oil and the downturn in construction and real estate has seen the UAE significantly affected by the global economic situation, GDP growth in 2008 is still estimated at around 8.5%.

The workforce

The population of the UAE is almost unique in its make-up. Only a fifth of residents in the seven Emirates are native Emiratis. The other 80% are immigrants drawn from across the globe – mainly from India and South Asia. The UAE also has the highest gender imbalance in the world, with more than twice the number of males to females.

Until recently, there were comparatively few formal education institutions and professional education programmes. Political influence over the education of the workforce was minimal. Drawn in by high wages and a good quality of life, imported labour has provided some sort of solution to the challenge of filling the demand for skilled workers. However, new thinking has been driven by changes in the global economy and a realisation of the long-term weaknesses associated with relying on imported skills.

Furthermore, the UAE currently has high levels of unemployment among its native population. This is partly due to the lack of incentives which might encourage unemployed people to seek employment. Social security payments are high, and the standard of living for the unemployed is such that working does not seem an attractive option to many. To address this, and to reduce the country's reliance on foreign labour, a process of 'Emiratisation' is currently underway. By law, many jobs have to be filled by UAE nationals - particularly those in the public sector. And, while this process will have little impact on the education of current or future employees, it does indicate a change of direction on the part of the governing authorities. Additional requirements include increased investment in the up-skilling of the Emirati workforce and a greater focus on national initiatives to develop skills for the future.

Professional education

Over the last two or three years, there have been a number of

/// We no longer look for hardcore experience in people... a fresh graduate, if we feel they have good team working skills and the confidence to handle the position we will take them on. ///

Employer, UAE

government initiatives that show intent on developing the local workforce, though the scale of these initiatives is still relatively small.

The National Institute for Vocational Education (NIVE) was opened in 2006. It is an organisation that is managed autonomously and wholly owned by the Knowledge and Human Development Authority in Dubai. Its initial intake was 200 students, and the organisation is looking to grow this number year after year.

The aim of NIVE is to provide world-class vocational education, benchmarked to professional industry standards. NIVE claims its focus is 'to provide students with the opportunity to gain specific job competencies geared towards enhancing their employability'. A key priority is to 'ensure [the] study program adheres to the latest international standards and earns accreditation from internationally reputed educational institutions'. NIVE identifies parents, students, teachers and businesses as key stakeholders in this process, and it is seeking to improve participation and effectiveness across the board.

The Abu Dhabi Vocational Education and Training Institute (ADVETI) also opened in September 2007. An initiative of The Abu Dhabi Education Council, ADVETI is a partnership between the Abu Dhabi government and New South Wales Technical And Further Education (TAFE) in Australia. Its aim is to offer Emirati students locally and internationally-recognised qualifications at diploma and certificate levels. Students taking a three year course at ADVETI will spend the first two years in full-time study and the third year in a part-time work placement. According to the institute's own publicity, their diploma 'is designed to meet the specific needs of industry in Abu Dhabi within a framework of international industry standards'.

While the scale of these initiatives is currently very small, as mentioned previously, the fact that both organisations have clearly articulated their objectives demonstrates that education policy makers are aware professional education has to be addressed if long-term economic growth is to be sustained and societal issues around employment are to be addressed.

Key emerging themes

The following themes reflect the principal areas of focus during the provocation meetings and accompanying research.

A lack of strategy and infrastructure

There is a perception that the governing institutions in the UAE are not delivering an effective, policy-driven programme to help develop appropriately skilled workers. One of the problems that has been identified is their federal approach. For example, Abu Dhabi and Dubai both have their own systems but there is little connection or collaboration between the two. There is some ongoing work at policy level to address the issues but it could take years for this policy to be implemented and for its effects to be felt in business and society.

Too much theory, not enough practice

There is a fundamental problem with the ability levels of recent graduates and those entering work for the first time. Regardless of the education they have received, very few are able to apply their knowledge in a live work setting. There are some key areas where this lack of experience is most marked; communication skills are often less than effective, for instance.

Think about the individual's attitude rather than the skill and qualification because we feel that if the person has the right attitude and right fit competency wise, you've got a good opportunity of creating what you need from that employee.

Employer, UAE

Moreover, many graduates do not have a sufficient grasp of English to operate successfully in a business environment, and many find communicating with different nationalities a significant challenge. In addition, many graduates either do not have critical thinking abilities or the confidence to show this skill. They cannot react to situations with positive actions and are much more likely to defer to a senior.

Without significant connection between education programmes and the workplace, these sorts of issues will persist.

Parallel systems of education

Businesses are beginning to take significant responsibility for the long-term education of their employees. Corporations are setting up their own institutes to deliver their own curricula.

There is a strong suggestion that the quality and value of these qualifications is considered higher than the programmes taught in public institutions. However, these institutes are unregulated and the qualifications they offer are not connected to a broader set of quality standards. Larger providers, like Microsoft, may still be able to provide internationally-recognised and valued qualifications but it will be harder for smaller organisations to achieve this.

Finally, there is an obvious issue around access. Private training institutions are not accessible to all, and this means there may be a damaging trend towards parallel education systems. People who cannot access high-quality corporate education are left with the public alternative and may be sidelined for employment opportunities.

Business goes it alone

The efforts of business and industry to take responsibility for training the workforce should be applauded. Even if the focus for many companies is restricted to 'educating their own', the net impact on the skills pool is undoubtedly positive. However, it seems that many businesses are operating in isolation – educational content, teaching methods and resources are not shared with 'competitors'.

Education and training are key drivers in developing a competitive edge and promoting staff retention. Having invested heavily in education, why should a corporation spoil its advantage by sharing knowledge and understanding? While there are examples of businesses working together to identify skills needs and develop programmes to meet these needs, businesses are typically keeping things in-house. Without collaboration, sectors will not benefit as a whole.

Identifying the need

No education system, private or public, can hope to fulfil its role as a provider of job-ready individuals without understanding the society's requirements.

There is a lack of communication between business and education. Businesses do not have many opportunities to inform education policy and to characterise requirements, which increasingly means that they see the education system as inadequate. On one level, this could be seen as a failure of the public structures that support education in the UAE. On another, there is a sense that businesses are not always clear about their own needs.

There are a lack of effective diagnostic tools to help businesses assess the strengths and weaknesses of their current staff. Consequently, businesses are less able to articulate where the skills gaps are. Work

/// I do receive training, yes, but it is not on the soft skills, it is on the hard skills. ///

Employee, UAE

needs to be done on both sides in order to improve this.

Developing quality as well as quantity

The rapid growth of the economy and the national propensity to import skilled labour has created huge opportunities in the UAE for education and training providers. In recent years there has been an influx of businesses and organisations at every conceivable level.

It is estimated that there are around a thousand training providers in Dubai alone. Many are small organisations that are focused on selling third-party training content, either via e-learning platforms or direct to businesses. At the other end of the scale, world-renowned universities (for example, the Sorbonne and Oxford) are establishing overseas campuses in the UAE. Seizing the opportunity to tap into a lucrative and ever-growing market, these organisations are filling the void left by an underdeveloped national education infrastructure.

The unregulated nature of further and higher education also makes the UAE an attractive investment opportunity for companies and institutions. But there are problems at both ends of the educational spectrum. The lower end of the market is saturated by small providers that claim to deliver effective and successful programmes but often fail to deliver. Without a clear framework, contracts are often awarded purely on the strength of the sales pitch rather than any demonstrable quality. At the upper end of the scale, the quality of teaching can vary greatly. It is sometimes difficult for universities to attract the best staff, for instance.

This reflects a wider issue. There is a sense that the general quality of teachers and trainers is very low. Without effective and inspirational teachers who are schooled in modern techniques, the value of any educational content is severely diminished.

Improving the perception of professional education

There seems to be a tendency for learners and employees to see their education as a way of accumulating certificates rather than gaining knowledge, skills and behaviours. It is more important for someone to prove that they have passed an exam than show they can do the job, even though employers would prefer the latter.

This mind-set is reflected in the perception of professional education against academic study. In spite of what businesses say they want, and in spite of the fact that learners want to secure a good job, candidates typically believe that academic study represents the most valuable and valued route into work.

As in many other places across the world, the value of academic study in the UAE is increasingly questionable. Greater numbers enter higher education and complete studies to degree level, while skills shortages are not being addressed. For many employers, a short job-specific training course can be a quicker passport to employment than three years of academic study.

Developing a workforce closer to home

The need for the UAE to develop its own skilled workforce is now undeniable. The countries that the UAE has traditionally targeted for overseas recruitment (for example, India) is now a booming economy itself. Rising living costs are also causing these talent pools to dry up.

Native Emiratis currently have a relatively low skill level. This is not surprising – they have not been required to work to maintain a reasonable standard of living, and the skilled workforce has been

*/// You can only
develop people
if you can retain
them. ///*

Employer, UAE

dominated by imported talent.

Qualities valued by employers in the UAE

- Self-awareness
- A high level of emotional intelligence
- The ability to do the job they are employed to do
- The ability to communicate knowledge
- The ability to manage well
- Commitment
- Personal accountability
- The willingness to take ownership of the business
- Discipline in terms of delivery
- The ability to learn

Conclusions

Demographics

There is a sense that the UAE is playing catch-up in many ways. The region is very much engaged in the global skills race but is currently ill-prepared to meet its own rapidly growing needs.

The model employed until now – that of importing the skills businesses need – has successfully fuelled growth. But this is becoming unsustainable as the competition for skills increases and the cost of living soars.

Education provision

The willingness of business to fund skills development is clear, though this may be down to necessity rather than will. The key challenge is for government to develop clearer strategies to support long-term education objectives. And, in doing so, they can engage more with business and industry.

Part of this strategy should be to link education and training content and providers to an assessment framework, and to develop clearer guidelines around accreditation. Without addressing quality assurance, businesses and educational institutions will waste money on ill-conceived or badly delivered education, and the skills gaps will continue to widen.

The quality of educators and trainers needs to be improved. The value of a good teacher cannot be overstated but it is often overlooked when governments and businesses address the issues of education and skills.

Professional education

There should be better training for in-house trainers and more emphasis on the development and recruitment of great teachers. There should also be better use of the skills, experience and personality of senior figures within an organisation. Empowering business leaders to assume greater responsibility for the training of their own people will be positive for all involved. Inspirational leaders, who are passionate about their business, can often communicate better than anyone else the values

they expect from their employees and the behaviours required for them to succeed within that company culture.

There is potentially a huge opportunity to create a new educational concept in the UAE. It has the resources, the business environment and, increasingly, the infrastructure. It also has a relatively small population, which means progress could be made quickly if the right vision is defined and supported.

Crucially, any new vision must be based around mutual engagement between business and education. Beyond that, there needs to be improved mechanisms for bringing businesses together, and less isolation when private institutions design and deliver their own professional education provision.

If the government demonstrates its commitment and vision to improving professional education, this could act as a catalyst for greater engagement between businesses. Businesses will come on-board if they see the value of being part of a wider solution. But they will continue to work in isolation if public education programmes remain disconnected from the realities of industry.



Chapter 8

Participant suggestions and recommendations

Chapter 8 Participant suggestions and recommendations

During the project, participants suggested actions that might help countries meet the challenge of developing effective education for employment. We have compiled a selection of these suggestions below, with the hope that they can be used as a foundation for further discussion and a focus for affecting positive change. The suggestions are also highlighted in Figure 5 on page 63.

Business

Developing a clear profile of the qualities valued by employers

Each business should develop and implement a vision of the qualities valued by employers, which includes the knowledge, skills and behaviours required from prospective staff. This can increase the success of recruitment and improve the education and development of existing employees.

An ambassador role within the industry

Businesses should take a wider responsibility for supporting skills issues within their own industry. They should be encouraged and provided with incentives to invest in education and professional development – for their sector, not just their own company.

A positive company culture

Developing a positive and proactive company culture can address the challenge of promoting appropriate attitude, behaviour, motivation and personal responsibility. Staff learn first-hand rather than through being told what is expected of them.

Managers should become better educators of their own staff

Mentoring is an extremely effective mechanism for employees to develop functional understanding and business socialisation. Not all training has to be formal. Engaging managers and leaders in the ongoing education of their own staff is a high-impact, low-cost approach that can be easily adopted in any size of organisation.

New methods for understanding the strengths and weaknesses of employees

Businesses should develop new methods for understanding the strengths and weaknesses of existing staff and potential employees – particularly in relation to transferable qualities. If the value of personal qualities is increasing, the time spent understanding and assessing them should also increase.

The qualities valued by employers should empower learners and employees

Employers should be encouraged to publicise their valued qualities.

Employees and job candidates can begin to gain a better understanding of what employers are looking for. Learners and employees will also gain a greater sense of their strengths and weaknesses, and can plan their professional development better.

Industry and education

A clear message on responsibility, attitude and commitment

By building long-term connections between schools, colleges and local businesses, stakeholders can begin to promote collectively some of the valued qualities for employees. This will demonstrate to young people how far they can get if they approach work in the right way.

Building transferable qualities into the curriculum

While there is evidence that suggests many of these qualities are developed prior to primary school, they should also be nurtured throughout an individual's educational life. The chances of building a job-ready workforce will increase significantly if we can embed this learning into primary and secondary education, with fine-tuning during higher or further education.

Apprenticeships and internships should be revived and incentivised

Apprenticeships represent a highly successful model for involving business and industry in education, and results are almost universally positive. Many countries are beginning to see the value in this approach, but more can be done – in particular, incentivising business involvement and supporting investment.

Teachers should gain more exposure to the business environment

The content and methodology of teaching will better reflect economic and workforce demand if we can develop a greater interaction between all levels of teaching staff and industry.

A redefined language around 'skills'

If we consider basic skills as 'the skills everybody needs', the definition should include some fundamental transferable qualities such as communication and team work, and basic attitudinal and behavioural attributes.

We need to rebrand 'vocational education' as 'professional education'. The word 'vocational' does not translate well into every language and has largely negative connotations where it is understood. Also, in many countries vocational study is seen as a separate and distinct branch of education. By talking about professional education – as we have done in this report – we are trying to remove the boundaries within which professional education operates. Over time, professional education will become associated with quality, opportunity and achievement.

Government and educators

A general skills curriculum aimed at school leavers

If we accept that there are a set of generic skills or attributes that most employers are looking for in their employees, it follows that a curriculum developed around these requirements could provide a solution – particularly in helping individuals become work-ready. An essential part of the curriculum should be the ability to learn.

Government legislation to drive business involvement

It should be compulsory for businesses to be involved in the design and delivery of professional education programmes, and governments should provide incentives for business to participate. Engagement between industry, policy and education is vital at every stage. Professional education can only meet its goals if industry clearly and continuously defines its demands.

A greater focus on practical and experiential learning

Learning-by-doing has long been accepted as the most effective way of teaching someone a skill. Classroom-based teaching must focus more on practical exercises, group work and creative activities. To supplement this, there should also be a considerable increase in the time students spend gaining hands-on experience of the work environment.

A code of conduct for educators

Professional education providers should publicise clear definitions of the content and methodology of courses as well as better, more consistent descriptions of expected learning outcomes.

An international quality system to grade professional education programmes

Governments and education providers/educators should instigate an internationally recognised quality assurance system to assess and grade professional education programmes. Benchmarking providers and course content will help to raise standards.

A campaign to tackle negative perceptions of professional education

Governments should fund a campaign to rebrand the concept of professional education and address negative connotations directly. Both learners and employers should be more aware of the value of professional education programmes and the possibilities for employment this kind of learning creates.

All stakeholders worldwide

Learning from good practice worldwide

All over the world, organisations and governments are running highly innovative, highly successful initiatives that are already tackling the issues outlined in this report. Successes should be identified and showcased to create the widest possible impact. We suggest a global conference on effective professional education.

An Institute of International Professional Education

Establishing an Institute of International Professional Education might play a significant role in increasing the status, standards and quality of teaching and assessment across the world. It might also be a valuable mechanism for developing and nurturing global alliances.

What next?

We sincerely hope that the issues identified in this report – and the ideas that are presented – are seen as a starting point for further discussions, for subsequent research and, above all, for positive action.

Edexcel has taken the report's findings onboard and is committed to researching and developing solutions that match up to the real-life challenges faced by governments, businesses, industry, educators,

employees and learners. The company is currently developing a suite of employability programmes and will continue to engage with key stakeholders to find ways each challenge can be addressed collectively.

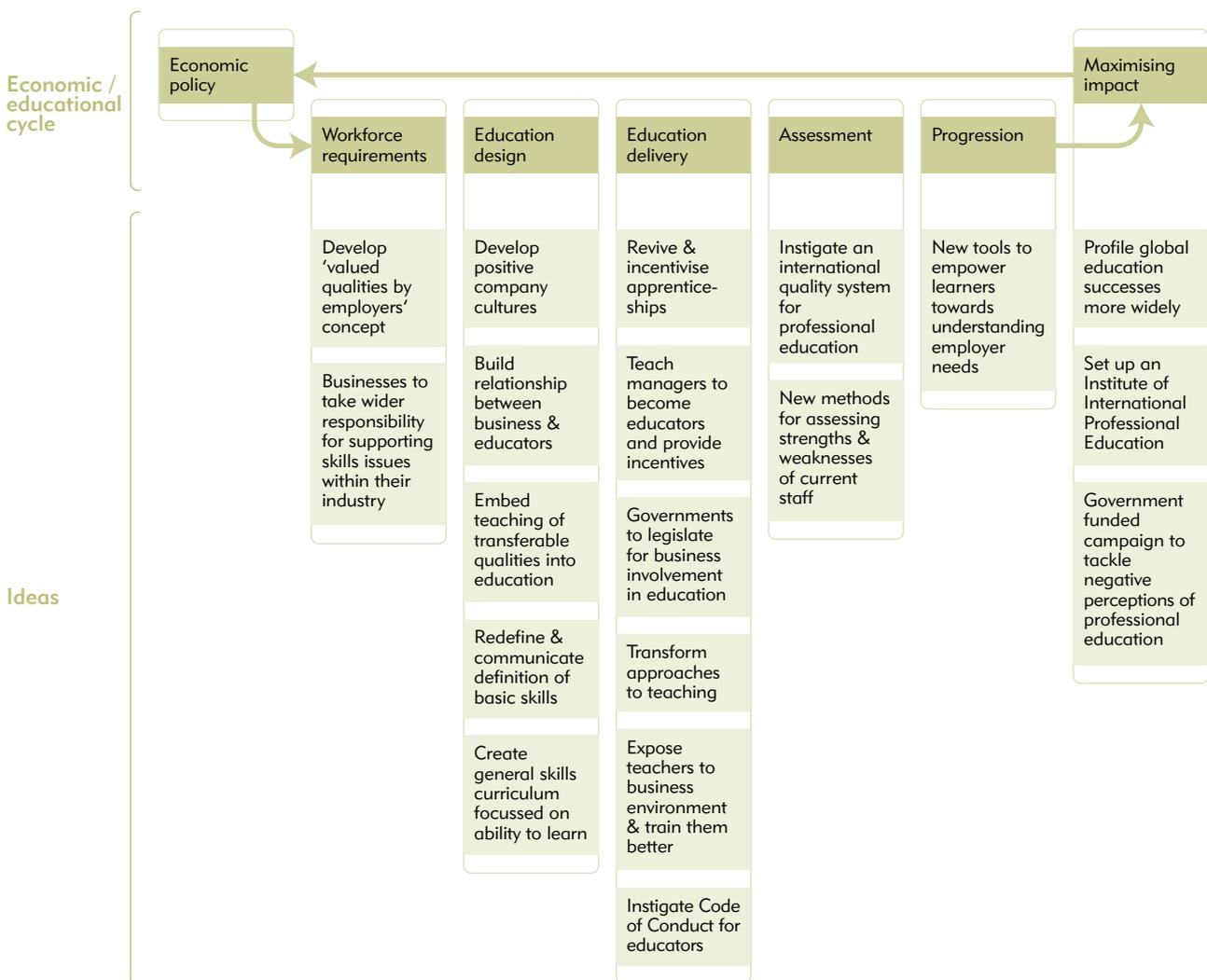
Effective education for employment can only be achieved if we all work together. All stakeholders must be involved, and there is a clear need for communication between them.

We believe that effective education for employment is a vital debate for the future of all economies and welcome and encourage your contribution. Let's all do more to bring about positive change.

Please get involved

To contribute to the effective education for employment debate visit our dedicated website www.eee-edexcel.com or contact Ross Hall, Director of International, Edexcel, at ross.hall@edexcel.com. Ross Hall is available to present the findings of the report and lead debate workshops.

Figure 5: Findings: ideas for positive change



Chapter 9 Appendices

Glossary of terms

One of the key challenges to emerge in our research is that of language.

Different words are often used to describe the same activity. A word can have a different meaning from one place to another or when used by different people within the same education system. Also, certain words carry negative connotations or are considered to be overly academic.

With this in mind, we have constructed a set of words for this report – words which we hope can be adopted more widely to provide clarity. Choosing words is never a precise activity, and an element of personal preference is inevitable. We are also conscious that the terms we have chosen are all English words.

Professional education	Learning that is directly focused on the development of knowledge, skills and/or behaviours relevant to an occupational area.
Knowledge	Understanding facts, information and ideas that allow an employee to know what they need to do to perform a task.
Skills	The mental or physical ability to perform a task effectively.
Behaviours	The way in which the employee acts in performing a task. This is in part determined by attitude, which is a term that was used widely in research discussion.
Quality	A defined combination of knowledge, skills and behaviours that together form the valued qualities of an individual assigned to a specific task. The degree to which a quality is required will vary according to geography, industry, employer, role and task.
Transferable qualities	Qualities that can be used by an employee in any role, with any employer, in any industry and in any country. In other words, they are qualities that are not specific to any sector, role or employer.
Industry-specific quality	A quality that is relevant to performing a task within a particular industry (for example, oil and gas, automotive, etc.).
Role-specific quality	A quality that is mostly relevant to performing a task in a particular job or function (for example, marketing, accounting, etc.).
Employer-specific quality	A quality that is mostly relevant to performing a task for a particular employer.
Academic education	Learning that has an emphasis on theoretical knowledge, usually gained in formal educational institutions like schools and universities. In most cases, academic learning is assessed via written examinations.

Participants in round-table meetings

Meeting 1

UK, 19th October 2007, Benares Restaurant, London

Chair: John Knell, Intelligence Agency

Attendees:

Steve Ackerman, Managing Director, Somethin' Else

Jill Franklin, Managing Director, Franklin Rae Communications

Nick Isles, Director of Advocacy, The Work Foundation

Marc Jaffrey, Development Director, Music Manifesto

Jagdip Jagpal, Partner, Carbon Search

Dr Jill Jameson, Director of Research & Enterprise, School of Education & Training, University of Greenwich

Ravi Kapur, Head of Innovation Challenges, NESTA and Director, GovEd Communications

Ajay Kathrani, Head of Science & Technology, London Development Agency

Harry Rich, Chief Executive, Make Your Mark

Prof. Christopher Winch, Professor Educational Philosophy & Policy, Kings College London

Ross Hall, Director of International, Edexcel

Claire Stuart, International Marketing Manager, Edexcel

Henry Playfoot, Managing Director, White Loop

Jim Playfoot, Director of Strategy & Ideas, White Loop

Meeting 2

China, 28th November 2007, Raffles Hotel, Beijing

Chair: Henry Playfoot, Managing Director, White Loop

Attendees:

Yue Han, Deputy Director, Dongfang International Education Exchange Centre, China Scholarship Council

Cynthia Ma, Head of Generali China Innovation Academy

Mike Mi, President, China Call Centre & CRM Association

Karen Sun, Director, Lusun Wyatt

Lily Sun, Director, Strategic Development Dept, CERNET Education

Zhou Ziao Ying, Centre Head, BTEC Centre, Capital University of Economics & Business

Ronda Xu, General Manager, England Beijing International Education Consulting Co Ltd

Jacky Gao, Regional Development Manager North China, Edexcel
Jim Playfoot, Director of Strategy & Ideas, White Loop

Additional interviews carried out with the following:

Mrs XIE Youlang, Vice General Secretary, China Vocational Education Association

Mr CHEN Lixiang, Party Secretary, Occupational Skill Testing Authority, Ministry of Labour & Social Security

Meeting 3

UAE, 3rd December 2007, The Fairmont, Dubai

Chair: Henry Playfoot, Managing Director, White Loop

Attendees:

Omar Al Awadi, DP World

Paul Michael Gledhill, Director & Co Founder, Xpert Learning

Ibrahim M. Jamel, Director-Business Development, Dubai Knowledge Village

Louise Northcott, HR Manager – Business Support, Emirates

Malcolm Pickering, Director, Sharjah Institute of Technology

George Saab, Chief HR Officer, Chalhoub Group

Peter Bonny Salleh, Learning and Development Manager, Learning & Development Centre, Emirates National Oil Company Limited (ENOC) LLC

Jarrold Hingston, Regional Manager for Pearson Research and Assessment

Mark Andrews, Regional Director MENA, Edexcel

Anne Anderson, Regional Development Manager MENA, Edexcel

Jim Playfoot, Director of Strategy & Ideas, White Loop

Meeting 4

India, 5th December 2007, Hotel Intercontinental, Mumbai

Chair: Henry Playfoot, Managing Director, White Loop

Attendees:

Dr D.P. Agarwal, Member, Union Public Service Commission

Mr Vivek Agarwal, CEO, Liquid

Dr Giri Dua, Chairman & MD, TASMACH

Mr Manu Ittina, Director, ITTINA
Dr Y Medury, Chief Operating Officer, Jaiprakash Associates Ltd
Dr Kamlesh Mishra, Director, IIMT
Prof. M.M. Pant, Former Pro-Vice Chancellor, IGNOU
Prof. Rupa Shah, Former Vice Chancellor, SNDT
Satish Sharma, Regional Development Manager India, Edexcel
Jim Playfoot, Director of Strategy & Ideas, White Loop

Meeting 5

South Africa, 21st February 2008, Grace Hotel, Johannesburg

Chairs: Henry Playfoot, Managing Director, White Loop
Jim Playfoot, Director of Strategy & Ideas, White Loop

Attendees:

Anton Du Plessis, CEO, CCX
Krappie Eloff, ETQA Manager, Food & Beverage SETA
Charnell Hebrand, City of Johannesburg
Audrey Kwapeng, Contact Centre Training College
Lavelle Nomdo, City of Johannesburg
Marie-Therese Portolan, MT@ Work Associates
Sune Rheeder, HR & Training Consultant, Paladin Consulting
Makwena Seshoka, CEO, Contact Centre Training College
Sandy Williams, NQ Systems Development
Anton Barnett-Harris, Regional Director Southern Africa, Edexcel
Jonathan McGill, Regional Development Officer Southern Africa, Edexcel
Ian Yeoll, Regional Development Manager Southern Africa, Edexcel

Meeting 6

Brazil, 13th March 2008, Paulista Plaza Hotel, Sao Paulo

Chairs: Jim Playfoot, Director Ideas & Strategy, White Loop
Henry Playfoot, Managing Director, White Loop
Fredric Litto, President, Brazilian Association of Distance Learning
Guy Gerlach, President, Pearson Education Brazil
James Tucker, Edexcel
Mavi Polo, Edexcel

Attendees:

Mirella Ugolini, Coordenadora de Desenvolvimento Humano, SERASA
Denise Asnis, Gerente de Educação Corporativa, NATURA
Leonie Adimari Bruno, Diretora Ejecutiva, Neomater Hospital e Maternidade
Paula Regina Vieira, Área de Desenvolvimento, Marketing e Gestão, Neomater Hospital e Maternidade
Sara de Oliveira, Ministério do Desenvolvimento, Indústria e Comércio Exterior
Sandra Regina dos Reis, Analista de RH, Fundepag
Andréa Fonseca Meroni, Gerente de RH e Qualidade, Fundepag
Antônio Soares, Gerente de Projetos, Banco do Brasil
Daniella Bergam, Núcleo de Desenvolvimento Educacional, SENAC-SP
Laércio Dona, Pearson Education Brazil

Meeting 7

UK, Friday 28th March, Work Foundation, London

Chairs: Jim Playfoot, Director Ideas & Strategy, White Loop
Henry Playfoot, Managing Director, White Loop

Attendees:

Mario Abela, Director, London Skills and Employment Board
Louise Dalziel, Director, Matchless Content
Nick Isles, Director Advocacy, The Work Foundation
Marc Jaffrey, Director, Music Manifesto
Dr Jill Jameson, Director of Research & Enterprise, University of Greenwich
Brian Leonard, Director Industry, DCMS
Julie Mercer, Deloitte
Aine O’Keeffe, Adviser to Will Hutton, The Work Foundation
Bridget Rivers-Moore, E-Publishing Manager, COI
Harry Rich, Chief Executive, Mark Your Mark
Ross Hall, Director of International, Edexcel
Claire Stuart, International Marketing Manager, Edexcel

