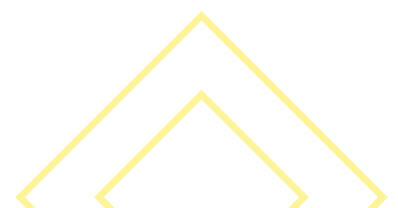


Creating Job-Ready Graduates

A Perspective





INTRODUCTION

The White Paper titled "**Creating Job-Ready Graduates - A Perspective**" is the outcome of a roundtable conference organised by TeamLease EdTech and TeamLease Foundation that addressed the pressing challenges at the intersection of education and employability in India. According to a study by TeamLease EdTech, about 60% of students completing their Secondary education never reach college. The most prominent reason attributed to this huge drop out rate is the opportunity cost and the diminishing employability of graduates in the country. This not only hinders individual potential but perpetuates cycles of poverty, stifling broader societal progress.

The event brought together key stakeholders from industry, academia, government, non-profits and the media, brainstorming on this topic and trying to find viable solutions while driving impactful change. The conference took place on August 28, 2024, at the Metropolitan Hotel, New Delhi, with a clear agenda: to bridge the gap between academic curricula and industry needs, ensuring that graduates are equipped with practical skills alongside theoretical knowledge. The event focused on the role that CSR leaders and Non Profits can play to catalyse change.

TeamLease EdTech, India's leading learning and employability solution company, has been at the forefront of enhancing student employability through its various initiatives. TeamLease Foundation, the social responsibility arm of TeamLease EdTech, leverages corporate social responsibility (CSR) funds to finance education for the needy and providing them with the necessary skills and opportunities for dignified careers. Together, these organisations are committed to the purpose of Making India Employable and creating innovative models in financing education, skill development and employability.

The conference highlighted the critical need for creating new financing models to develop and expand work-integrated learning programs, which are essential for bridging the gap between education and employment. It also emphasised the importance of rigorous research to evaluate the effectiveness of current skill-building initiatives, ensuring that resources are directed toward the most impactful interventions.

By bringing together educators, employers, donors, and government officials, the conference underscored the importance of a holistic and collaborative approach to solving India's employability challenges. The discussions set the stage for ongoing dialogue and action, aiming to create a more inclusive and equitable education system where every student, regardless of financial circumstances, has the opportunity to succeed in the job market.

This White Paper consolidates the key issues, insights, and recommendations from the conference, providing a roadmap for enhancing CSR initiatives to improve employability outcomes. It will be submitted to the relevant ministries, with the hope that it will inform and guide future policies and strategies aimed at transforming education and creating job-ready graduates in India.



AGENDA

The roundtable conference was designed to address critical challenges at the intersection of education and employability in India.



Bridge the gap between students who complete 12th grade and those who can afford higher education by developing innovative financial models that allow students to continue their education while supporting their families, ensuring their long-term career potential is not lost.



Develop solutions to prevent young individuals from entering informal jobs due to financial constraints, preserving their prospects for meaningful employment and societal contribution.



Align university education with industry needs by integrating real-world work experience with academic learning, ensuring graduates are both theoretically knowledgeable and practically skilled, ready to contribute effectively from day one.



Focus on **enhancing societal progress and driving economic stability** by ensuring that education equips individuals not just for personal success but for broader societal benefit.



Conduct rigorous research to evaluate the effectiveness of current skill-building investments, ensuring that resources are directed towards the most impactful programmes and yielding long-term benefits.



Develop additional funding models to support and expand work-integrated learning programs, ensuring students from underprivileged backgrounds can access these opportunities.



Foster **collaboration between corporates, universities, and other stakeholders** to secure necessary resources and funding to develop scalable, impactful employability solutions.



Create an **inclusive and equitable education system** where students, regardless of financial circumstances, have access to the skills and experiences needed to succeed in the job market.



Bring together the **entire ecosystem of stakeholders—educators, employers, donors, government officials, and media representatives**—to foster partnerships and adopt a collaborative approach to solving India's employability challenges.



Focus on **actionable strategies** that enable the combined efforts of all stakeholders to create a brighter future for India's youth through a transformed education and employability landscape.

ORGANIZED BY

TEAMLEASE EDTECH

TeamLease EdTech is India's leading Learning and Employability solution company. It helps universities launch, run and manage their own Online Programs, improve the employability of their students through its apprenticeship programs and helps employers build talent supply chains along with improving employee productivity. Through its cloud-hosted, mobile-first, managed services platform, TeamLease EdTech provides a wide range of services - enrollment, learning, upskilling, apprenticeships, student support and assessment - helping customers improve access and learning outcomes. TeamLease EdTech has exclusive partnerships with 65 of India's largest Universities across 16 Indian states, and it trains 7.5 Lakh students on its platform through 9 Indian languages, works with 1500 corporates in their upskilling/skilling initiatives and manages over 200 degree, diploma, certificate programs.

TEAMLEASE FOUNDATION

TeamLease Foundation is the social responsibility arm of TeamLease EdTech, dedicated to creating sustainable impact through education and employability initiatives. The foundation works closely with corporate donors, leveraging CSR funds to empower youth by providing them with the necessary skills and opportunities to secure dignified employment.

VENUE AND DATE:

The roundtable conference took place at the Metropolitan Hotel, New Delhi, on August 28, 2024.

PARTICIPANTS

GOVERNMENT AND CSR REPRESENTATIVES:

Mukesh Kumar

Chief Programme Executive - CSR
Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs

Bindiya Goyal

Economic Opportunities Officer
UNICEF

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Group CSR Head, Krishna Maruti Limited
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Pankhuri Nigam

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Swarup Bhattacharya

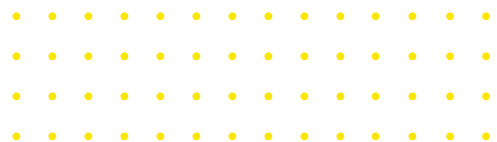
General Manager, Operation
TeamLease Foundation

Varun Maheshwari

General Manager CSR
TeamLease Foundation

Rupica Saxena

CSR Manager
TeamLease Foundation



In India, for any particular job, having the right skills is necessary, but yes, a qualification is also required. Even skilled professionals often find they need formal qualifications to advance. That's why many working professionals are returning to education, not just to learn new skills but to get the necessary degrees or certifications. This balance between skills and qualifications is important here, as both are still very much needed. ”

Saroj Kumar Verma

Director Distance & Online Education
Noida-International-University



KEY ISSUES RAISED

Financial Barriers to Education:

A significant issue discussed was the financial crisis that prevents many students who have completed their 12th grade from enrolling into higher education. This discontinuity hinders their employability and perpetuates the cycle of poverty.

“As was rightly mentioned, when it comes to demand and supply, there will always be demand in the market. The real challenge lies on the supply side, particularly in our education system. We consistently face issues with the supply of skilled graduates who meet the specific needs of the industry. Addressing this imbalance is critical if we want to see real improvements in employability.”

Ashish Dangar
Dy. Manager CSR
Dr Lal PathLabs

Misalignment between Academic Curriculum and Industry Needs:

Participants highlighted the persistent gap between the skills taught in academic institutions and those demanded by employers. This misalignment results in graduates being underprepared for the job market.



One thing I strongly believe is that today's course curriculum, as I've mentioned before, seems to be working in silos. I may not have a complete understanding of the internal workings of the universities, but from what I see, there is a lack of collaboration between academia and industry. The industry needs 'X', but we are producing graduates skilled in 'Y'. This misalignment is a significant issue. As part of our corporate social responsibility, it becomes our duty to partner with the government and educational institutions to develop curriculums that are in line with real industry needs."

Om Sharma
Senior Project Portfolio Manager
SITA

Lack of Work-Integrated Learning Programs:

The conference underscored the shortage/lack of programs that integrate work experience with academic learning, which is crucial for students to gain practical skills alongside theoretical knowledge.

Need for Additional Funding:

There was a consensus on the need for additional funding to develop and scale work-integrated learning programs, which are essential for improving student employability and meeting industry demands.

Inefficiencies in CSR Implementation:

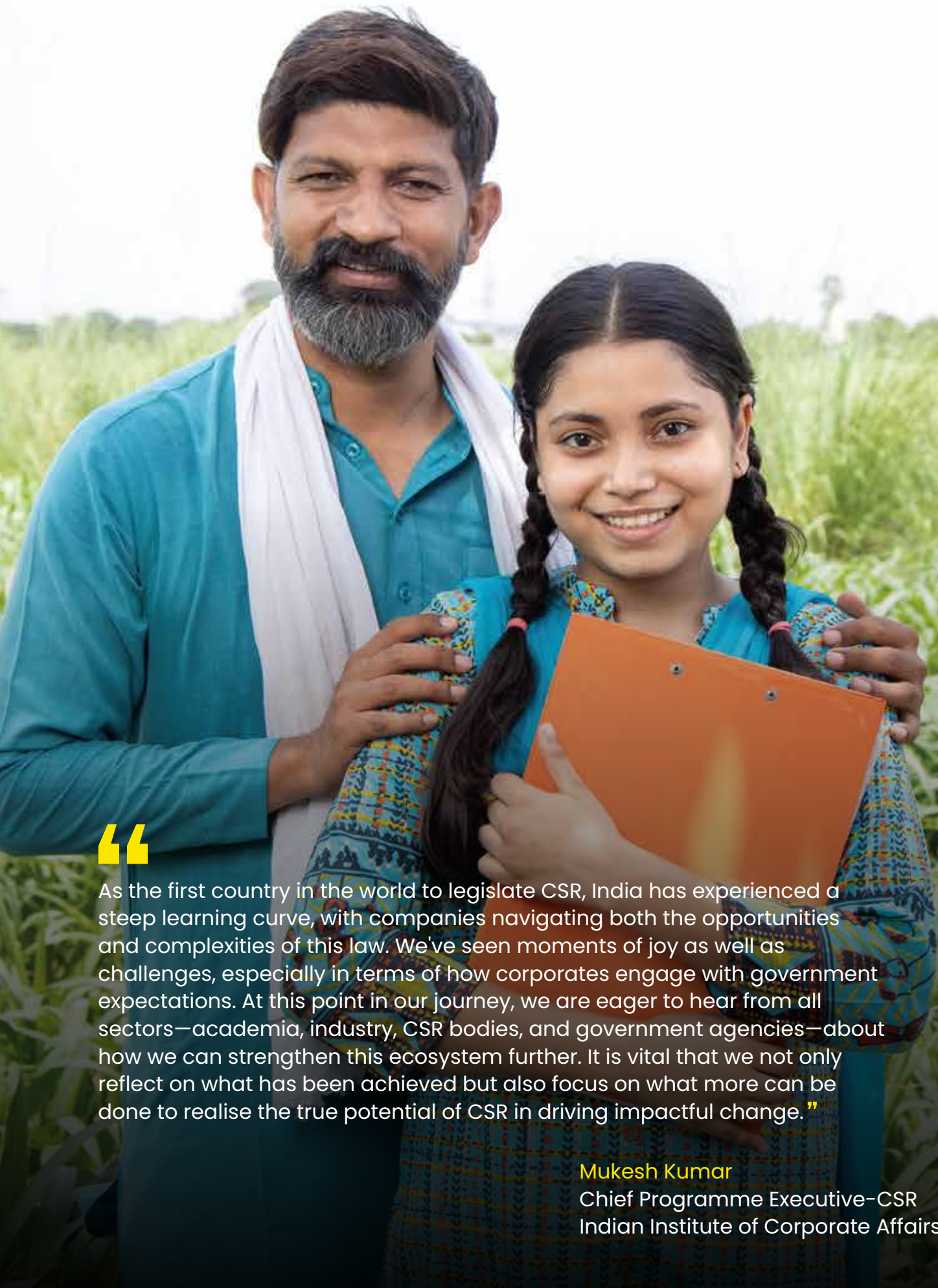
Some participants pointed out that current CSR initiatives are not fully aligned with the evolving needs of society and industry, leading to suboptimal outcomes.

Skill vs Degree:

Another theme was the perceived value of skill certification versus degrees. There is a need to cultivate pride in vocational training certificates and place them on par with academic degrees in the public eye.

Skill Development for People with Special Needs:

The inclusivity of skill development was also discussed, with a specific focus on creating tailored programmes for individuals with disabilities. This ensures that everyone, regardless of ability, can contribute to and benefit from the job market.



“

As the first country in the world to legislate CSR, India has experienced a steep learning curve, with companies navigating both the opportunities and complexities of this law. We've seen moments of joy as well as challenges, especially in terms of how corporates engage with government expectations. At this point in our journey, we are eager to hear from all sectors—academia, industry, CSR bodies, and government agencies—about how we can strengthen this ecosystem further. It is vital that we not only reflect on what has been achieved but also focus on what more can be done to realise the true potential of CSR in driving impactful change.”

Mukesh Kumar
Chief Programme Executive-CSR
Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs

KEY THOUGHTS AND INSIGHTS

EMPHASISING COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS:

Several attendees stressed the importance of collaboration between corporates, academic institutions, and government bodies to create a more cohesive ecosystem for education and employability.

INCORPORATING DIGITAL AND HYBRID LEARNING MODELS:

With the rise of digital education, there was a strong push towards adopting hybrid learning models that combine online and offline experiences, making education more accessible and adaptable to various needs.

PROMOTING VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND APPRENTICESHIPS:

Vocational training and apprenticeships were recognized as critical components of the education system that should be expanded and integrated into mainstream academic pathways.

ENHANCING CSR TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY:

It was suggested that CSR activities should be more transparent and accountable, with clear metrics for measuring impact and aligning projects with national education and employment goals.

LEVERAGING TECHNOLOGY FOR SKILL DEVELOPMENT:

The role of technology in enhancing skill development was a recurring theme, with discussions on how AI, machine learning, and other digital tools can be used to personalise and scale education.



PROPOSED SOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



ESTABLISHING PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS:

A key recommendation was the establishment of public-private partnerships (PPPs) to bridge the gap between education and employment. These partnerships would enable resource sharing, curriculum development, and the creation of job-oriented courses that meet industry standards.



SCALING UP WORK-INTEGRATED LEARNING PROGRAMS:

To address the gap between academic knowledge and practical skills, the conference proposed scaling up work-integrated learning programs. This includes expanding internships, apprenticeships, and on-the-job training opportunities for students - a proactive approach by employers has been sought.



CREATING A NATIONAL CSR FRAMEWORK FOR EDUCATION:

Participants recommended the creation of a national CSR framework specifically focused on education and employability. This framework would guide corporates in aligning their CSR initiatives with the broader goal of enhancing employability and reducing the education–employment gap.



INCREASING FUNDING FOR SKILL DEVELOPMENT:

The need for increased funding, both from CSR and government sources, was highlighted as crucial for developing skill development programs that are accessible to all, particularly underprivileged students.



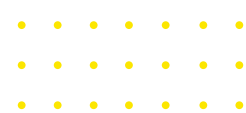
PROMOTING LIFELONG LEARNING AND CONTINUOUS EDUCATION:

Finally, the conference emphasised the importance of lifelong learning and continuous education. This approach would ensure that individuals remain employable in a rapidly changing job market, and would support ongoing skill development beyond formal education.



MASSIFICATION AND GLOBALISATION OF SOLUTIONS:

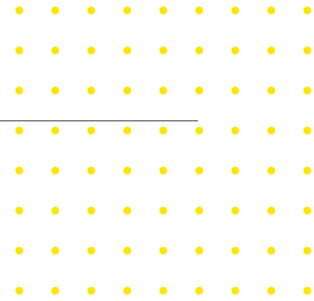
To address the scale of India's employability challenge, it was highlighted that solutions must go beyond small-scale interventions and target mass impact. The idea of creating the "India Skill Stack", a standardised, scalable skills platform, was proposed as a way to globalise and massify solutions to employability issues.





CSR DEPLOYMENT WITH A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE:

Attendees also emphasised the need to deploy CSR funds not just with a local or national focus, but with a global perspective, ensuring that India's talent pool is competitive on a global scale.



BENEFICIARY ACCOUNTABILITY:

The controversial but crucial point of holding beneficiaries accountable for the opportunities they receive was raised. This would ensure that the grants and opportunities provided through CSR initiatives are effectively utilised and lead to measurable impact.

CONCLUSION

The roundtable conference on "Creating Job-Ready Graduates - A Perspective" brought together a diverse group of stakeholders from industry, academia, government, and the media to address critical challenges in the education-to-employment pipeline. The discussions highlighted the need for greater alignment between education and industry, increased funding for skill development, and the adoption of innovative learning models. The proposed solutions, including the establishment of public-private partnerships and the creation of a national CSR framework for education, provide a roadmap for enhancing the effectiveness of CSR initiatives in improving employability outcomes. This White Paper serves as a comprehensive summary of the key issues, insights, and recommendations from the conference, and will be submitted to the relevant ministries for consideration and action.



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