

English Skills for Employability: The India Model

October 2015

Introduction

India context

Young labour force, 55% under 30 years of age

Variety of regional dialects

What is the role of language/English in increasing mobility for the growing mass of disempowered youth?

Think Tank

British Council and the National Skills Development Corporation (NSDC)

Key Indian stakeholders from industry, education

Employability

2013, research conducted by Aspiring Minds, a company involved in assessing various aspects of education, training and employment concluded

“...nearly half of Indian graduates are not fit to be hired.”

The employability of graduates varies from

2.59 % in functional roles such as accounting

15.88% in sales related roles

21.37% in the business process outsourcing (BPO/ITeS) sector.

A significant proportion of graduates, nearly 47 per cent, were found not employable in any sector, given their English language and cognitive skills,” the survey findings show

Think Tank Stakeholders

NSDC 2009

British Council

Key decision makers from industry:

Construction

retail

Health care

Beauty and wellness

IT (ITES) sector

Media

Hospitality

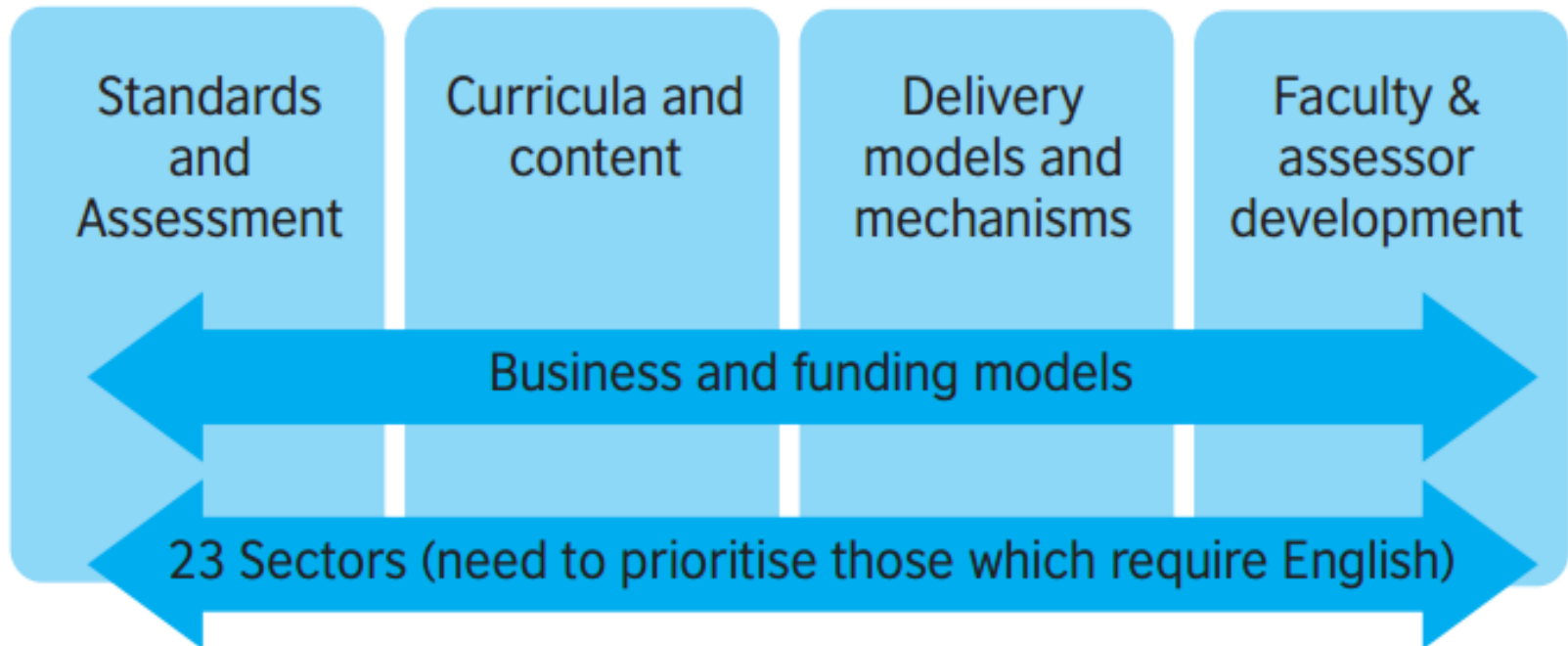
Financial services

Who are the ESfE Think Tank participants?

The Think Tank has been attended by representatives of government bodies, Sector Skills Councils, private and public organisations and academic institutions with a role to play in the development of the English Skills for Employability sector.



Priority areas as identified by the Think Tank



Quality standards and assessment

Lack of benchmarking to bridge academe and industry

Mr Ramadorai

suggested that a common definition of soft skills needs to be understood.

A framework of functional linguistic competence against which industry needs and requirements can be mapped and existing proficiency levels can be assessed. Once the English language skills gap has been identified, appropriate curricula and approaches can be designed and implemented to close the gap, and assessments can measure outcomes

What is the CEFr?

Common European Framework of Reference

http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/cadre_en.asp

CEFR provides a basis for the mutual recognition of language qualifications, thus facilitating educational and occupational mobility.

Six main levels across the 4 skills:

C2 / C1 – indicative of a **Proficient user**

B2 / B1 – indicative of an **Independent user**

A2 / A1 – indicative of a **Basic user**

CIFr... CPFr?

Proficient User	C2	Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.
	C1	Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.
Independent User	B2	Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.
	B1	Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.
Basic User	A2	Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, and employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.
	A1	Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way

CEFr

1. **Objective, reliable, valid** in its assessment of 'global communication' - and 100% transparent to all.
2. **Useable and understandable** - making it comprehensible to non linguists.
3. **Sustainable: trainable** to your teams in order for them to reliably assess language using CEF.
4. **Recognised and informative** – allows assessors to plan training curricula based on real 'training gaps'.
5. **Developmental** – can be linked to performance management, teaching and training, as language learning objectives can be pegged to CEF.
6. **Helps learner learn** – relates to qualifications and learning objectives and provides learning objectives and motivation to progress.
7. It's a **free** tool.

Delivery mechanisms

The need for innovative mechanisms to improve access for the millions who need training in both vocational and soft skills, including English, over the next decade was considered crucial

How to deliver, i.e. through face-to-face, online, blended solutions for example, would be to some extent determined by market forces, but equity of access to quality provision for marginalised groups is important.

Example:

M Learning

Centurion University highlighted the success of the Gram Tarang employability initiative which develops students' skills to work for Café Coffee Day through a bespoke three month training course.

Curriculum and content

Once competencies and standards have been developed, the focus needs to be on what needs to be delivered.

One curriculum is unlikely to be sufficient in a country with the size and diversity of India. Core to this is the need for local contextualisation that is age and culture appropriate, develops functional competence and literacy skills and above all, meets industry expectations and requirements.

However, curricula and syllabi can be designed to the same set of standards. The NSDC is looking for partners who can work with them to design and or accredit curricula and content.

Faculty and assessor development

Faculty development is critical, not only for those faculty teaching English, but also those responsible for teaching vocational skills. Ideally, faculty members would work together collaboratively to plan their syllabi to ensure that vocational and soft skills are integrated and reinforced.

The faculty needs to fully understand industry needs and ensure that their students are aware of the skills and competencies they need to be successful in their job search.

Developing their skills in formative and summative assessment, using the national standards identified for the target trades is another area of priority

Business and funding models

The challenge remains to find appropriate curricula, content and pedagogy that is not cost-prohibitive.

Business and funding models Funding of research, innovative delivery models, curricula and content is essential to help India identify what works and to bring about sustainable change.

UK-India Research Initiative (UKIERI) could consider supporting comprehensive pilots that are scalable and sustainable.

The introduction of voucher schemes can also provide learners with the power to choose a course that meets their own learning needs at their own convenience. the NSDC STAR Scheme aims to do just that and encourage skill development training programs and could be extended to cover English language skills.

The UK has established a system of Corporate Social Responsibility bonds

The introduction of the new 2 per cent allocation to CSR mandated by the new companies act provides an opportunity for companies to pool resources to contribute towards key skills development areas

What the stakeholders say

British Council

1. To conduct action research with three Sector Skills Councils to identify how the linguistic levels of the CEFR could be best integrated into vocational qualifications developed under the National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF) to aid access, ongoing skills development and career progression.
2. To develop a new entry level within the context of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), that recognises achievement pre level A1.

What the Stakeholders say

“The current research report represents a step towards developing a better understanding of the language requirements of entry level jobs in three different sectors: construction, hospitality and health care.”

Sarah Kemp Chief Executive Trinity College London

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What the Stakeholders say

“English needs are variable across sectors, and geographies, so this research will contribute to development of a new framework to bring together both the professional skills and language requirements in the Indian context.”

Sarah Kemp Chief Executive Trinity College London

What the Stakeholders say

“Employability is a vital issue for India. It’s about a person’s ability to get a job, keep that job, and move on to their next job. Language and communication skills are a key foundation to employability, to which this report makes an important contribution. It recommends actions we can take to build an India-specific framework for language and identifies a new entry level for English language skills.”

John Yates CEO Manipal City & Guilds

What the Stakeholders say

“As a part of so-called ‘soft skills’, effective communication is a fundamental building block to successful employment. A candidate’s ability to present their knowledge and skills effectively to employers is vital during the selection process; and the employee’s skills with language – speaking, reading, or writing – will have a major impact on their performance on the job with customers, with their supervisor and with colleagues; and as a result, their prospects for promotion to the next job.”

John Yates CEO Manipal City & Guilds

