



**Roundtable on Sector Skills Council: From Policy to Implementation  
(In partnership with the Ministry of Labour and Employment)**

**The Imperial Hotel, New Delhi  
22 August 2009**

One day roundtable discussion focusing on formulation and successful implementation of SSCs was organised jointly by the British Council and the Ministry of Labour & Employment. A selected group of 25-30 top-level decision makers from the government (including representatives from the Ministry of Labour and Employment, Planning Commission, NSDC Ministry for Human Resource Development, Finance, Industries, Rural Development, Housing and Micro and Small & Medium Enterprises), industry partners (CII, FICCI, Assocham and PhD Chambers of Commerce) and the UK's Sector Skills Council and industry representatives participated at this roundtable.

Prabhat Chaturvedi, Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Employment in his keynote address congratulated British Council on initiating the first ever focussed roundtable discussion on this very vital topic. He opined that countries with higher and better skills adjust more effectively to the challenges of globalization. Sharda Prasad, Director General (DGET), Ministry of Labour and Employment in his opening address brought forward the importance of skills in a growing economy like India and how skills development is a key to sustaining economic progress. He also stated that the Sector Skills Councils are a Public Private Partnerships model which needs a commitment and an engagement both from the industry & the academia on the one side and the Government on the other.

The discussions thereafter revolved around the specific need of constituting the Sector Skills Council, which is one of the the key agenda in the National Skills Policy 2009. B Santhanam, Chairman Skills, CII advocated that skills are a complex problem which need to be addressed and the formation of Sector Skills Councils is the way ahead. The discussions re-emphasised that it is not the employment but the employability of the work force which is the problem and this can be done only when the occupational standards, curriculum design, certification and the trainings are market driven. The importance of a well structured Labour Market Information system was also highlighted.

Another key recommendation that emerged from the day long discussions was the emphasis on the outputs of SSCs rather than focussing on the inputs. It was agreed that SSCs should be able to identify skills needed by the industry and the work force trained on the basis of these identified skills should be employable.

The UK experience on Sector Skills Councils was shared by Chris Humphries, CEO, UK Commission for Employment and Skills and Jack Matthews, CEO, Improve Ltd. UK has a strong understanding of the working of SSCs which have been the interface between government & education on one hand as well as industry & the workforce on the other. They have successfully raised employer engagement, demand & investment in skills along with developing National Occupational Standards which are based on the employer needs. The SSCs in UK have emerged in an advisory role, overseeing delivery and providing a unique forum for the employers to express the skills and productivity needs which are pertinent to their sector.

Chris and Jack both emphasised that for the success of SSCs, it is essential that each SSC should have a strong employer board, strong leadership and have at least 2% of the work force though looking at the volumes in India the figure is far too less. They also advocated the

need for SSCs to be flexible to the needs of the employers, be innovative in its approach and have risk taking capacity. One of the key recommendations from the discussion was that the funding for the Sector Skills Councils should be done both by the industry and the Government; this will enable more commitment and a larger engagement.

As a way forward, the formation of first ever Sector Skills Councils in India as a pilot was discussed and Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM) agreed to take the lead on forming SSC in the automobile sector. The Ministry of Labour and Employment would also identify a small team of delegation to visit UK and gain first hand experience of SSC model there. Ministry of Labour and Employment were also keen for UKCES and other UK SSCs to mentor the formation of SSCs in India.

Some of the other key points which emerged during the deliberations are enumerated below:

1. Need for strong SSC linkage with the Government.
2. Occupational standards should specify outputs and not the inputs and assure quality through certification.
3. Link skill policy to industry policy since they are interrelated.
4. Bottom up approach is needed to develop the structure of SSCs which includes a further discussion on the mandate, function & and sector development strategy.
5. Involvement of trade unions is important and critical.
6. Strategic involvement from the state governments is essential and a pragmatic approach is required for the formation of SSCs.
7. Need to sensitize the importance of acquiring of skills amongst students above class 8 onwards.
8. Look at the existing institutional framework like the ITIs and do the capacity building along with SSC formulation.
9. In UK SSCs cover 90% of the skills force but the formal structure is very small in India and involvement of informal sector needs to be worked out.