



Evaluation of the UK-India Education & Research Initiative
Executive Summary & Recommendations

20 October 2008

**The UK-India Education
& Research Initiative**

A mid-programme review

River Path Associates
20 October 2008

Executive Summary

UKIERI is a complex partnership, involving a number of UK public sector organisations, as well as corporate partners, the devolved administrations, and the Indian government. Developed in response to commitments made on joint work across the education sector by the Prime Ministers of the UK and India, it has been a high profile project since its inception in 2005/06. UKIERI has a planned lifespan of five years, and has currently reached the midway point in that cycle. To date, it has committed almost just over £20 million to support hundreds of bilateral partnerships between India and the UK in three areas: higher education, schools, and professional and technical skills.

This mid-programme review examines 10 aspects of the programme, ranging from financial control to the quality of links brokered. The review report is divided into six main sections, as follows:

- Strategic Aims and Scope of UKIERI;
- Operational Review (including detail on governance, processes and procedures, and financial control);
- Outputs Review (including detail on meeting targets, the quality of links, and effectiveness of marketing);
- Stakeholder Review (including detail on beneficiary views, funders' expectations, relationships with corporates, and the India/UK relationship);
- The Future of UKIERI;
- Recommendations

Each section concludes with a summary of key points for easy reference, and a range of Annexes accompanies the report.

The overarching finding of the review team is that UKIERI is a well-run, strategically sound programme, which has had some success in contributing to the main strategic aim of creating a step change in the relationship between India and the UK in education. We believe that by 2011, stakeholders at all three levels of the programme in both countries will be better prepared to collaborate in the future. In particular, we believe the Board and Project Management Team are to be commended on their ability to make such a complex partnership work to such a high degree of effectiveness.

On the whole, we believe the governance of the programme is sound, although we have recommended that Board and Project Management Team members should have access to more detailed financial information in order to make fully informed decisions. We have also found that the processes of the programme work well in the main, although we would recommend closer working with RCUK and making use of their acknowledged expertise in this area, on the process of selecting research partnerships should the possibility of another

round of awards present itself. In addition, we are also broadly satisfied with the financial control of UKIERI. Our most significant recommendation for change concerns UKIERI's current practice of issuing a single contract to one UK institution in each partnership (for all strands). It is our understanding that this is principally for reasons of cost control in administration. The review team however believes that the level of dissatisfaction that this practice has caused is high, and in some cases jeopardises relationships brokered under UKIERI. We are of the opinion that this practice should be reviewed, preferably before contracts are settled with the 2008/09 round of recipients.

UKIERI is also on course to meet or exceed most of its quantitative targets, with the exception of those it has set itself in the area of collaborative programme development. We note however, that in some cases targets would not have been met without the allocation of additional funding to the programme in January 2008 by the UK government. The evidence on the quality of links brokered is that these are, in the main, high. In particular, a large proportion of beneficiaries who responded to the review have indicated they are likely to continue working with partners, and seeking new ones, into the future.

Most funders of UKIERI seem broadly satisfied with the return they see on their investment. There is less clear consensus about this issue among corporate partners than other funders of the programme, and we have observed a correlation between the hypothecation of financial contributions to particular projects and relatively higher levels of satisfaction with the experience. It is our view that in the event of future corporate funding becoming available, the private sector is more, rather than less, likely to require the ability to tailor programmes and become directly involved in exchange for financial contributions.

In summary, we believe the relationship between India and the UK in education has been enhanced by the UKIERI programme. This is epitomised by the willingness of the Department of Science and Technology to co-fund some research awards in the 2007/08 and current 2008/09 rounds. It is our understanding that the Department is keen to explore further avenues for collaboration in the future.

This collaboration and further progress towards the goal of achieving a step-change in the relationship between the two countries is clearly contingent on further funding, led by the UK public sector, not only from 2011, but also to maintain the momentum of the programme over the next two years. Given this, we believe the UKIERI Board and PMT should start working towards the establishment of a UK/India Education Trust in 2011, which will take on responsibility for achieving the original strategic aim of preferred partnership by 2020. With a remit for developing institutional relationships and leading on policy dialogue, the Trust would be responsible for co-ordinating the work of a series of independent partners who would lead on higher education, schools, and PTS work respectively.

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Recommendations

1. In this section we summarise the conclusions and recommendations we have reached on a range of issues relating to UKIERI, its performance, development and future.
2. Overall, we believe UKIERI is a well-run programme that is broadly meeting its strategic aims. As we have observed, UKIERI is a complex partnership, and it is the opinion of the review team that the UKIERI Board and PMT are to be congratulated on their ability to balance the priorities of funders and other stakeholders, while maintaining sight of the overarching aim of achieving a step change in the relationship between India and the UK in the education space. The review also believes that the ability of UKIERI to build on its original funding, both through attracting additional contributions, and through leveraging in-kind support has been impressive.
3. We have the following recommendations and discussion points for the future of UKIERI post-2011:
4. The likelihood of UKIERI attracting further funding is a key issue in the question of its future. We believe that without further resources being committed to the programme in the short term to 2011, the brand will suffer, it will be impossible to leverage further resources from DST, and it will be difficult to resurrect UKIERI for a second phase. However, we note that UKIERI has had significant success to date in raising additional funding, and that the strategic issues it was established to tackle remain current and important. We further believe that this would be the case for a post-2011 incarnation of the project, and have therefore assessed the three options for consideration on the basis that funding will be available from the UK public sector in the future.
5. Given the quality of UKIERI, the continuing relevance of developing relationships between India and the UK, and the likelihood of future funding to some extent, we **do not recommend** the first option of decommissioning the programme and trusting the education sector in both countries to achieve the step change in relationships. In particular, we observe an asymmetric ability to do so in the higher education sector, while all work with schools and FE colleges to date has been achieved through an active matchmaking process.
6. **Nor do we recommend** the second option of converting UKIERI into an umbrella brand in the future. While this course of action is appealing in some ways, we do not believe that all partners and likely future players will agree to work as part of the brand. In particular, we caution against allowing the current strength of the UKIERI brand to act as a brake on developing options for the future.
7. Our **preferred course of action** would be for UKIERI to work towards establishing a UK/India Education Trust to allow it to continue its work post 2011. It is our view that the secretariat and core work for such a Trust would need to be supported by the UK public sector, but that it should prove possible to attract funding from other sources to support specific projects.

8. We **recommend** that the suggested UK/India Education Trust should have a core remit of brokering institutional relationships, of organising work in the policy dialogue area, and of co-ordinating the work of independent partners across each of the three strands. We further **recommend** that while RCUK and the British Council appear to be natural successors to the HE and schools strands respectively, through Science Bridges, Connecting Classrooms, and other programmes that may emerge, further work still needs to be done to establish a partnership for the PTS strand. We therefore **recommend** that this part of the programme should form the focus of UKIERI's final two years, with the aim of transferring responsibility for work in this area to an independent partner by 2013 at the latest.
9. In addition to our recommendations for UKIERI post-2011, we have developed a set of specific, actionable recommendations for the immediate future of the programme, as follows:
10. We **recommend** that steps be taken to ensure that Board members and members of the PMT have access to more detailed financial information on UKIERI to enable them to make informed decisions and assess the performance of the programme more rigorously on an ongoing basis. Specifically, we recommend that the core project team should produce regular financial digests for circulation, using our Annex One to this report as a starting point.
11. We **recommend** that steps be taken to organise formal online or phone based forums for the corporate partners and devolved administrations. We believe this development would improve communications between these partners and the rest of the Board, and result in more active engagement.
12. We **recommend** that the British Council take steps to ensure it is making optimum use of its network, and particularly its offices located in Mumbai, Kolkata and Chennai, in the delivery of the UKIERI programme. The review team believes the combination of a presence in all four metros, as well as sectoral expertise, is a strong argument for delivery of the programme via the Council.
13. We **recommend** that a discussion be held at both Board and PMT levels on the distribution of funds between the three strands of activity. At present, higher education is slightly over-resourced, while the other strands are slightly under-resourced against target. At the same time, the rationale for an 85:10:5 split of programme funds does not appear to be clear. The value of this discussion is, of course, contingent on more funding for partnerships becoming available in the future.
14. We **recommend** that a discussion be held at both Board and PMT levels on the possible merits of focusing funding on fewer projects to a greater level of support, and of focusing investment in the future on hot-housing a defined set of relationships in between particular cities and regions in India and the UK. As above, the value of this discussion is, of course, contingent on more funding for partnerships becoming available in the future.

15. We **recommend** that in the event of future funding rounds for research awards, UKIERI should take steps to involve RCUK more actively in the peer review process. In our opinion, this would have the effect of reassuring some stakeholders of the quality of the process, at the same time as beginning the process of sharing information with RCUK that we recommend above.
16. We **recommend** that the Board and PMT take urgent steps to review the practice of awarding a single contract to a leading institution in each partnership (for all strands of activity), with a view to making changes in contractual arrangements for the pending round of awards. Specifically, we **recommend** that the core project team undertake an analysis of the impact of contracting with all institutions on administrative overheads on the programme. We further **recommend** that an urgent debate be convened on the rationale for contracting with a lead institution in the UK in all cases, and that the core project team should prepare a comparative analysis of the cost of key items in India and the UK, to enable the Board and wider PMT to make informed decisions related to the asymmetrical needs of the programme in both countries. Of all the issues raised in the review process, we believe this one to have the most potential to set back the strategic aims of the programme.
17. We **recommend** that a discussion be held at PMT level on the possibility of reviewing the contact seminar process in the schools strand to feature closer pre-matching of institutions in advance of the event. We further **recommend** that the PMT consider developing a matching process for the higher education strand, with the aim of encouraging more applications from truly new partnerships, and a wider pool of institutions. Both these recommendations are contingent on more funding for partnerships becoming available in the future.
18. We **recommend** that the PMT should focus on online social networking mechanisms as the most cost effective and self sustaining way of developing dissemination of learning and contacts between beneficiaries of UKIERI. Specifically, we **recommend** the establishment of a UKIERI Facebook group to be used as a test-bed for developing approaches to this issue.
19. We **recommend** that more systematic use be made of the standard annual reporting mechanisms that UKIERI has in place across all three strands of activity. Specifically, we **recommend** that the core project team undertakes to produce a regular analysis and digest of progress reports for wider PMT and Board use, with a focus on leverage of additional funds, performance against budget, and evidence of concrete outcomes.
20. We **recommend** that efforts to market UKIERI to beneficiaries should focus on online and networking. We further **recommend** that PR and printed marketing should be focused on delivering messages to senior and political audiences, and that UKIERI should keep its expenditure on brand development to a minimum.

