TeamLease™

EDTECH FOUNDATION

Making India Employable

Power of the Ecosystem

Catalysts for Careers and Livelihoods

INTRODUCTION

India is at a unique demographic and economic crossroads. With over 65% of its population under the age of 35, the country has the potential to unlock an unprecedented demographic dividend. Yet, this promise is threatened by a persistent gap between education and employment. While graduates are increasingly stepping out of academic institutions with degrees, they often lack the skills, confidence, and industry-readiness required to navigate and contribute meaningfully to the workforce.

The need of the hour is a shift from fragmented, isolated interventions to a more cohesive, ecosystem-led model - where academic institutions, industry, policy-makers, CSR funders, skilling providers, and social organizations collaborate to convert youth potential into sustainable livelihoods.

It was in this context that the TeamLease EdTech Foundation hosted a high-impact roundtable on May 22, 2025, at NCAER, New Delhi. Themed **'Making India Employable – Power of the Ecosystem: Catalysts for Careers and Livelihoods,'** the event brought together over 25 leaders from CSR bodies, foundations, sector skill councils, multilaterals, and implementation partners. Together, they shared innovative practices, ecosystem insights, and on-ground models that aim to bridge the employability gap in India.

This white paper captures the essence of that gathering - its challenges, solutions, stories, and strategic recommendations - with a view to shaping an inclusive and impact-driven employability landscape for India.

AGENDA & DISCUSSION HIGHLIGHTS

The roundtable focused on building a nuanced understanding of the graduate employability challenge in India, particularly among underserved youth. The conversation explored how CSR interventions and ecosystem partnerships can shift the discourse from access to education toward pathways to employment and entrepreneurship.

KEY DISCUSSION AREAS:

▶ **Understanding graduate unemployability: Is it a skills issue, a mindset issue, or a system issue?**

▶ **Work-Integrated Learning (WIL): How can apprenticeship, internships, and applied models of learning be scaled through CSR?**

▶ **Livelihoods beyond employment: Empowering micro-entrepreneurs, women-led enterprises, and informal workers**

▶ **Closing the loop between education, skilling, and career enablement: Insights from implementation models**

▶ **Funding the future: Exploring blended finance, returnable grants, and scalable CSR models**

▶ **Creating gender-inclusive, climate-aligned, and tech-ready skilling pipelines**

These conversations were enriched with real-world examples and were aimed at fostering partnerships, aligning goals, and exploring actionable CSR strategies.

ORGANIZED BY

TEAMLEASE EDTECH

TeamLease EdTech is India's leading Learning and Employability solution company. It helps universities & HEI institutes 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 EDTECH FOUNDATION

TeamLease EdTech 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 **NCAER, Delhi, on 22nd May, 2025.**

PARTICIPANTS

INDUSTRY & CSR REPRESENTATIVES

Helle Lund, National Head - CSR, HPPI
Rohit Koshy, Fundraiser, PanIIT Alumni Foundation
Deepika Arora, President - Training and Development, Haqdarshak
Shadan Mirza, Associate Director - Growth and Innovation, Samhita
Nirmala B Walter, Founder, Manobal Foundation
Nishkarsh Bareja, Co-Founder, Samaavesh & Manthan
Ashwini Vashisht, Founder, Indrashmi Foundation
Parul Sachdeva, Country Advisor, Myriad USA
Vishal Masih, Corporate Fundraiser, Impact Guru Foundation
Prem Ashra, Co-Founder & CEO, Sampark Sathi Foundation
Manika Saxena, Associate Consultant – ESG Advisory, KPMG India
Nitya Prakash, CEO, QualityNZ Education
Abhinav Kumar, Project Manager, Catalyst
Ankit Malani, Technical Advisor, GIZ
Shruti Kapoor, Programme Specialist, UNICEF
Jigna Nawani, Senior Programme Director, Piramal Foundation
Jyoti Sharma, CEO, Nasscom Foundation
Salil Chaturvedi, Lead - Skilling & Employability, Nasscom Foundation
Sushant Agrawal, Regional Head - North, Lighthouse Communities
Swapna Mishra, Director, Textile Sector Skill Council
Priyanka Shaw, Senior Manager, Haqdarshak
Shifali Gupta, Cluster Head, Lighthouse Communities
Arpit Sharma, CEO, Skill Council for Green Jobs
Rohit Rajput, Senior Manager - CSR Programs, CSRBox

REPRESENTATIVES OF TEAMLEASE EDTECH & TEAMLEASE EDTECH FOUNDATION

Shantanu Rooj, Founder & CEO, TeamLease EdTech
Jaideep Kewalramani, COO & Head - Employability Business, TeamLease EdTech
Anshul Gupta, Head - Impact Projects, TeamLease EdTech Foundation
Varun Maheshwari, General Manager - CSR, TeamLease EdTech Foundation
Chandana Datta, Manager – Impact Projects, TeamLease EdTech Foundation
Rupica Saxena, CSR Manager, TeamLease EdTech Foundation

KEY ISSUES RAISED

1. The Persistent Gap Between Education and Employability

Despite increasing access to higher education, a large number of graduates are unable to secure meaningful employment. The disconnect lies in both the relevance of academic curricula and the absence of practical, workplace-linked experiences.

> There is a gross enrolment ratio of only 28.4% in India - which means out of every four Indians in the 18–24 age group, only one reaches higher education. And even when they do graduate, they are far from job-ready.
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> **Nitya Prakash,** CEO, QualityNZ Education

2. Work-Integrated Learning Remains the Exception, Not the Norm

The industry demand for talent with practical exposure is growing, yet programs integrating classroom learning with real-world work (apprenticeships, internships, live projects) remain limited and often unstructured.

> We tried to operationalize in-plant training across ITIs with almost no industry collaboration at first. But after four years, we've placed 15,000 students, and their outcomes changed dramatically.
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> **Ankit Malani,** Technical Advisor, GIZ

3. Under-leveraged CSR Potential

While CSR spending in India is substantial, it is often fragmented, short-term, and limited in scale. The challenge lies in structuring CSR investments to support long-term livelihood outcomes, not just training inputs.

> The CSR trend is shifting - more funds are coming into employability, but they need to be structured better. A ₹10,000 course per student may not seem like much, but when scaled to thousands, it's a barrier for most CSR funders.
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> **Shadan Mirza,** Associate Director, Samhita

4. Missing Mindset for Lifelong Learning and Upskilling

In both formal and informal sectors, there's a lack of motivation, awareness, and infrastructure to promote lifelong skilling. Many workers assume their initial roles will remain unchanged over decades.

> **Workers in the textile sector see no pathway beyond their current roles. We need behavioural nudges, upskilling roadmaps, and career progression models to inspire change.**
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> **Abhinav Kumar,** Catalyst

5. Invisibility of Job-Readiness Skills in Formal Education

Participants noted that many graduates - even from professional degrees like MBAs - struggle with basic communication, industry etiquette, and applied problem-solving.

> **An MBA in Finance could not answer basic questions in an interview. The issue is not just knowledge gaps, its absence of applied thinking, soft skills, and confidence.**
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> **Deepika Arora,** Haqdarshak

6. Gendered Access to Skilling and Livelihoods

Female participation in formal skilling programs remains low in technical and non-traditional roles. Societal expectations often relegate women to tailoring, beautician, and home-based enterprise tracks.

> **Even today, we have few or no female fitters, mechanics, or electricians in the textile sector. Yet women are capable, and there are examples of all-women operator shifts - proof that it can be done.**
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> **Dr. Swapna Mishra, CEO,** Textile Sector Skill Council

1. CSR-Funded Tech Skilling with Built-in Placement Guarantees

Model: Nasscom Foundation

Nasscom Foundation has impacted over 1.5 lakh learners through classroom-led, CSR-funded tech skilling programs. With a mandate for 60% women beneficiaries, their model relies on strong implementation partners, employer networks, and close monitoring to ensure placements.

2. Fellowship and Work-Immersion Pathways

Model: Piramal Foundation

Through programs like the Gandhi Fellowship, youth are immersed in multi-year, stipend-supported experiential learning. The program boasts 100% employability upon graduation and focuses on building civic, leadership, and problem-solving skills.

3. Job-Ready Rural Women Entrepreneurs

Model: Haqdarshak

Haqdarshak has created a cadre of 40,000+ women micro-entrepreneurs trained to help communities access welfare schemes. These women earn between ₹5,000–₹65,000/month and operate in both rural and urban areas, many of them first-time earners.

4. Public-Private Models for Applied Technical Learning

Model: GIZ India & ITIs

Using the German dual vocational education model, GIZ enabled 15,000+ in-plant training across ITIs. These were aligned with real industry needs and demonstrated significantly improved placement outcomes.

5. Aggregation Platforms for Underserved Communities

Model: Sampark Sathi Foundation

Instead of pushing programs to communities, this model lets individuals from underserved areas raise their own needs - be it skill training, jobs, or health - and connects them with NGOs and government partners accordingly.

6. Gender and Climate-Ready Skilling Pipelines

Model: UNICEF India

UNICEF has adopted a layered funnel model - from awareness to career guidance to direct placement - with embedded gender and climate lenses, powered by collaborations with private sector and civil society.

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Scale Work-Integrated Learning Programs Across Institutions

❯ CSR and government partners must co-invest in applied education formats.
❯ Embed internships, apprenticeships, and on-the-job modules into UG/PG curricula.
❯ Incentivize employers for mentoring and capacity-building.

2. Develop a National CSR Framework for Employability

❯ Create shared metrics and sectoral priorities across education, skilling, and employment.
❯ Encourage long-term funding cycles aligned to job outcomes.
❯ Explore hybrid models like returnable grants, outcomes-based financing, and blended capital.

3. Focus on Ecosystem Co-Creation Over Individual Impact

❯ Encourage convergence between NGOs, skilling partners, sector skill councils, and employers.
❯ Identify anchor institutions and local champions to own outcomes.
❯ Promote transparent governance and unified data sharing across partners.

4. Mainstream Gender and Inclusion in Skilling Strategy

❯ Fund initiatives that place women in non-traditional roles - electronics, automotive, mechanical, and IT.
❯ Support flexible skilling formats for caregivers, single mothers, and differently abled youth.
❯ Build gender-disaggregated data pipelines to monitor impact.

5. Strengthen Soft Skills, Digital Literacy, and Career Readiness

❯ Embed modules on communication, resume-building, interview skills, and digital tools in every program.
❯ Partner with tech companies and universities to scale access to AI-based learning platforms.

CONCLUSION

The roundtable reaffirmed a collective belief: that India's employability crisis is not just a supply problem, nor solely a demand issue. It is a systems challenge - requiring a systems solution.

CSR leaders, implementers, and policy enablers must move from transactional training models to transformational career ecosystems. As seen in the diverse models shared - from rural entrepreneurs to tech skilling programs, from in-plant training to youth fellowships - the potential to scale impact exists. But it demands courage, capital, and collaboration.

Going forward, the TeamLease EdTech Foundation commits to building more such platforms where changemakers align vision with execution, funding with outcomes, and intention with action. Together, we can ensure that India's youth are not just educated, but empowered; not just skilled, but employable; not just employed, but thriving.

CONNECT WITH US

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