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Industry – Academia PARTNERSHIPS

A Catalyst for India's Global Capability Centres (GCCs)

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From the CEO's Desk

India's Global Capability Centers have entered a decisive phase. What began as an exercise in operational efficiency has matured into a sophisticated network of problem-solving, product-building, and research-led innovation.

Yet, scale alone does not ensure resilience. As this report outlines, two forces will shape the next decade of India's GCC journey: the availability of deeply skilled talent, and the ability to embed innovation at the core of operations: not as a function, but as a mindset.

Bridging these gaps requires more than hiring or training. It calls for an institutional response. One that draws upon the intellectual strength of academia, and the applied urgency of industry. When aligned with intention, these partnerships don't just solve for today's needs, they shape tomorrow's capabilities.

This document is not merely an analysis. It is the architecture of what is possible when ecosystems collaborate. At Inductus, we remain committed to enabling that future—quietly, deliberately, and with the confidence that India's best chapters are still being written.

Alouk Kumar

Alouk Kumar - Founder & *CEO,*
Inductus Group

Global Capability Centres (GCCs) or Offshore Delivery Centres (ODCs), an offshore R&D and service hubs of multinational corporations, have exploded in India. By FY2024, India hosted over 1,800 GCCs with nearly 3,000 sites employing approximately 2.0 million people and generating about $64.6 billion in revenue. This represents roughly 50% of all GCCs worldwide.

These centres have rapidly evolved from age-old cost-focused “delivery centres” into multi-functional innovation-led R&D hubs. Nearly 90% of Indian GCCs now support end-to-end technology, operations, product engineering and R&D functions. The ecosystem is expected to grow to $110 billion by 2030, with roughly 3.0 million employees.

This boom is primarily driven by India’s vast talent pool and emerging tech focus. GCCs boast around 125,000 AI/ML specialists and over 185 AI/ML centres of excellence in India, and many revolve their activities around cutting-edge areas like data analytics, cloud, IoT and cybersecurity.

Industry-academia partnerships often bridge theoretical research with practical applications, leading to innovation, economic growth, and talent development.

Despite the momentum, Indian GCCs face critical bottlenecks:

Talent Shortages & Retention: Competition for skilled tech talent is intense. **Over 50% of GCC employees are actively exploring new jobs**, and **about 51% of centres rank talent retention as their top challenge. Demand for niche skills (e.g. AI/ML, cloud, cybersecurity) has driven GCC salaries up to 20–25% above standard IT roles,** yet qualified candidates remain scarce. High attrition exacerbates the problem – for example, about **28% of senior GCC professionals changed jobs in the past year.**

Skill & Upskilling Gaps: Many graduates lack the practical skills required by GCCs. Industry reports point to acute shortages in emerging fields (for instance, India faced around 40,000 open cybersecurity positions in 2023 despite an 800,000+ shortfall of trained professionals). GCCs are forced to devote significant resources to in-house training. Yet traditional academic programs often lag behind industry needs, leaving fresh hires underprepared for specialised roles (e.g. AI model development, advanced analytics, secure software engineering).

Innovation & Growth Plateaus: While scale has grown, innovation penetration has lagged. A recent study finds that **around 15% of the GCCs have substantially improved enterprise value through innovation or efficiency.** Most centres remain focused on "delivery execution" rather than acting as strategic R&D engines. In other words, India's GCCs risk under-utilising their potential as drivers of cutting-edge solutions unless they inject more research and co-creation into their models.

Issues such as talent crunch, mismatched skills, and an innovation gap threaten to slow the GCC sector's future growth unless addressed. Strategic industry–academia partnerships are the need of the hour and could pave the way and offer a powerful solution.

Industry–Academia Partnerships: Addressing GCC Challenges

Engaging academia helps GCCs bridge talent and innovation gaps in several ways:

Building a Talent Pipeline: GCCs may collaborate with universities to co-design curricula, certification programs, and internship schemes. For example, many centres "co-develop curricula with universities, offer internships, and sponsor research chairs" so that graduates emerge with industry-relevant skills. Such programs ensure a steady flow of trained entrants. Dedicated Centres of Excellence (CoEs) or labs on campus (e.g. in AI or cybersecurity) allow students to work on real-world problems, giving companies early access to skilled interns and hires.

Joint R&D and Innovation Labs: Companies fund or participate in university research labs to tackle strategic challenges. These co-innovation labs provide GCCs access to cutting-edge research at a lower cost. For instance, firms may set up AI/ML or IoT testbeds in engineering institutes, where students and faculty collaborate on new solutions. This boosts innovation by combining academic curiosity with company problem statements. The flipped benefit is that academic partners gain practical data and applications for their work, creating patents or prototypes that can be commercialised.

Embedding Industry Expertise in Academia: Schemes like AICTE's "Professors of Practice" and similar initiatives aim to inject seasoned professionals into academic roles. By appointing former industry experts as adjunct faculty or lecturers, academic programs can stay tightly aligned with evolving practice. These professors bridge the gap between theory and application: they shape the curriculum around cutting-edge skills, bring real-world case studies into the classroom, and mentor students on live projects. As AICTE notes, such roles "align academic curricula with industry needs, providing students with a deeper understanding of how theoretical concepts apply in real-world scenarios". Ultimately, this enhances graduates' employability and creates a talent pool immediately valuable to GCCs.

Upskilling Current Workforce: Many partnerships focus on upskilling existing employees. For example, Wipro collaborated with IISc Bangalore to offer online MTech degrees in AI to its employees. Programs like this (often part-time, co-designed by the institute and company) allow professionals to acquire advanced competencies (e.g. in data science, ML) while working. By jointly investing in such formal education, companies rapidly upgrade their human capital and build loyalty.

These collaborative models directly counter GCC challenges. They expand the skilled talent pool at entry and mid-levels, create clear career growth pathways, making employees less likely to churn, and infuse fresh innovation into pipelines.

Thought Leadership & Networking: Industry–academia ties also yield intangible benefits: joint conferences, publications, hackathons and workshops. These raise a GCC's profile, disseminate best practices, and attract creative talent. For instance, sponsoring student research competitions or tech symposiums helps companies scout innovative ideas and fosters a culture of continuous learning across both campuses and corporate labs.