

Report on Study Visit to Canberra and Sydney, Australia
India EU Skills Development Program
(4.11. 2015-12.11. 2015)

The India-EU Skills Development Project organised a study visit to Australia from 4.11.2015 to 12.11. 2015. A delegation of 12 members from various states, SSCs, NSDA, NSDC and government departments was part of this study visit. The key objectives of the study visit was to gain insights from Australian VET system in terms of industry linkages, development of national policy for TVET, quality assurance, research to build a strong skilling ecosystem in India.

Major Reform in the Australian VET system

Australian Government will bring a major reform in its VET system where Industry Skill Councils (ISCs) will be replaced by Industry Reference Committees (IRC) who will support new Skills Service Organizations (SSO). The new model will be based on strong industry representation and have less sectors, fewer than 12. This reform will be operational from 1st January 2016.

I. Meeting with Agri Food Skills Australia

5.11.2015, Canberra

Brief description about the organization-AgriFood Skills Australia is one of 11 independent, not-for-profit Industry Skills Councils (ISCs) established by the Australian Government Department of Industry. AgriFood develops and implements workforce development strategies and industry's nationally endorsed qualifications to meet the current and emerging needs of agrifood enterprises, employees and students throughout regional and urban Australia.

Salient points

- 1) **National coverage:** Industry Skill Councils (ISCs) in Australia have national coverage with effective representation of states, regions and territories. There are only 11 ISCs in Australia
- 2) **Independent:** ISCs are independent, not for profit organizations that are funded by the Australian Government and managed by boards comprised by industry representatives
- 3) **Competitive model of funding:** Although ISCs are funded by the Government, funding is provided through a competitive process in which tender is floated, competitive bid is made and only most competitive ISC receives funding from the government
- 4) **Effective industry representation:** Each ISC has a number of advisory groups, committees, technical and specialist groups representing different industry sectors within their coverage
- 5) **Checklist on industry endorsement:** AgriFood Skills has a proper checklist on industry endorsement. Industry consultations are proportionate to the size of the sector

- 6) **Environmental Scan:** ISCs develop Environmental Scan which includes,
 - broad analysis of current and emerging skill gaps
 - details of workforce issues namely specific skill shortages, skill needs, regional requirements
 - an overview of the current impact and use of competency, qualifications and implications for further development
- 7) **Key role:** The key role of the organization is to develop training packages which are similar to occupational standards in Indian context. Development of companion guide for the training providers
- 8) **Assessment:** Assessment in Australia is undertaken by the registered training organizations (RTOs)
- 9) **Involvement of SMEs:** Industry Skills Fund for SMEs is provided by the organization to develop professional skills on the basis of number of employees and growth opportunity
- 10) **Success in international recognition:** The ISC has been successful in establishing mutual recognition of its qualifications with New Zealand
- 11) **Career Progression Analysis:** It is being conducted by collating real time information from industry groups through online surveys, telephonic interviews, focus group discussions and applications for business research
- 12) **Cross industry skilling:** It is delivery of transferable skills sets required by multiple industries within the region which can provide a mobile workforce deployment strategy. E.g., agriculture and other industries like fishing, mining and tourism

Key Learnings in Indian context

Mutual recognition of qualifications with neighbouring countries: Australia has successfully established referencing of its qualifications with New Zealand through direct consultations between SSCs of both the countries. In this regard, the country has Mutual Recognition Act. Hence, on the same lines, India can also start the process of mutual recognition of its qualifications with the neighbouring countries such as Bhutan, Myanmar, Sri Lanka.

Cross industry skilling instead of increasing the number of SSCs: Presently, India is having 40 SSCs and the number is expected to rise, we can focus on cross industry skilling which is more suitable in our country as we do not have high number of specialist jobs.

Need of micro level Environmental Scan instead of macro level Skill Gap Studies: The Skill Gap Studies in India are prepared at a macro level which lack the assessment of micro level factors. Environmental Scans include not only macro and micro factors of a particular industry but also evaluate the impact of training packages and suggest the future directions for training packages. The similar kind of in-depth analysis is required in India.

Need to have an effective industry representation: It has been noticed that in our country industries are handpicked by SSCs for validation of qualifications and their

representation is also not proportionate to the size of the sector. However, in Australian context, strong industry representation is ensured through a proper endorsement policy, checklist on industry endorsement and proportionate representation. The same needs to be adopted in India as well.

II. Meeting with Australian Government Department of Education and Training

5.11.2015, Canberra

Brief about the organization: The Department of Education and Training is responsible for national policies and programmes that help Australians access quality and affordable early child care and childhood education, school education, higher education, vocational education and training, international education and research.

Salient points

- 1) **Status of VET:** The Australian VET system provides training to about 3 million students per year, 1.5 million of whom are subsidised by Australian governments. Australia has nationally agreed & consistent standards, nationally agreed competency based qualifications and flexible delivery options and pathways.
- 2) **Unique Student Identifier (USI):** From 1st January 2016, all students doing nationally recognised training need to have a Unique Student Identifier (USI). A USI is a reference number made up of numbers and letters. Creating a USI is free. It creates a secure online record of nationally recognised training that can be accessed anytime and anywhere.
- 3) **USI as ready reference:** USI will help in generating a complete record of Australian-wide VET achievements and a ready reference for employers, training organizations. The information is linked to account which can be accessed by individuals while the same can also be accessed by government funded bodies. **Training data will be collected by USI and utilized by National Research Body i.e. NCVET.**
- 4) **USI is underpinned by Student Identifiers Act 2014:** USI will be regulated by Student Identifiers Act 2014 which is an act to provide for student identifiers and access to transcripts relating to vocational education and training, and for related purposes.
- 5) **Framework for Secondary Students:** The department has also developed a framework for vocational learning and VET delivered to secondary students. Through vocational learning secondary students can explore the world of work, identify career options, and plan their senior secondary education and training and tertiary education options.
- 6) **Industry Skills Fund-** Australian Government provides Industry Skills Fund in terms of skill advice and training grant to over 250,000 training places and

support services for industry. The Fund prioritises SMEs, including micro businesses, and is delivered through the Single Business Service, which streamlines access to essential information for all Australian businesses.

Key Learnings in Indian context

Need to learn from the insights of Framework of Secondary Students: Australia has given immense focus on the skilling need of secondary students for which they have a framework in place, which is not present in India. We can study such available models in order to build our own framework to address the skilling needs of secondary students that is much needed in our country.

Ensure industry participation of SMEs through Industry Skills Fund: Since the fund gives priority to SMEs that are awarded funding. The same fund can be introduced in India where SMEs can be funded for skilling by co-contributing an amount depending on the size of the business.

III. Meeting with the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA)

5.11.2015, Canberra

Brief about the organization: ASQA is the national regulator for the vocational education and training (VET) sector in Australia. *It was established in July 2011 by the enactment of the National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011.* The organization seeks to make sure that the sector's quality is maintained through the effective regulation of:

- vocational education and training providers
- accredited vocational education and training courses, and
- Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students (CRICOS) providers including those delivering English Language Intensive Courses to Overseas Students (ELICOS).

Salient points

- 1) **Functions as national regulator:** ASQA regulates training courses and providers to ensure nationally approved quality standards are met. It regulates approximately 4100 of the 4900 training providers across Australia.
- 2) **Functions as a national accrediting body:** It accredit vocational education and training courses that are not covered by Training Packages.
- 3) **Structure:** ASQA is an independent statutory agency, comprising a Chief Commissioner and two other Commissioners, who are appointed by the Governor-General. ASQA staff support the Commissioners in their regulatory function. It employs more than 200 staff across Australia and has offices in every state and territory.
- 4) **Strong regulatory approach:** ASQA conducts panel site audits from people working in that particular sector.

- 5) **Risk-based regulation:** ASQA responds to risks that may arise if a learner is judged competent without possessing the required skills and knowledge.
- 6) **Complaint Cell:** ASQA accepts complaints about training providers from students, their representatives and other members of the community and after assessing may take necessary actions.

Key Learnings in Indian context

Need to set up a national regulatory body: Australia has a well-established national regulatory system which is responsible for quality assurance. Similarly, India also needs a strong regulatory body which can perform such functions to ensure quality and effective delivery of trainings. The mechanism will also establish Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for training providers and will help in actual risk assessment in VET system.

Need to have a Complaint Cell in place: There is an immense need to have an effective complaint cell in place so as to check any ampractices in the skilling ecosystem and ensure quality delivery of trainings.

IV. Meeting with the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER)

6 .11.2015, Canberra

Brief about the organization: The National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) is a not-for-profit company owned by the Commonwealth and state and territory ministers responsible for vocational education and training. It is a professional and independent body responsible for collecting, managing, analysing, evaluating and communicating research and statistics about vocational education and training (VET) nationally. NCVER's vision is to inform and influence vocational education and training in Australia through credible, reliable and responsive research and statistical services. Its mission is to be Australia's authoritative source of high-quality independent information on vocational education and training.

Salient points

- 1) **Working as a highest statistical body:** NCVER is not working within a government department. It is the sole information collector and highest statistical body in Australia.
- 2) **Key Stakeholders:** The key stakeholders of the organization are government of Australia, state, territory, minister with responsibility for training
- 3) **Funding Pattern:** The organization is funded by membership and by COPE funds
- 4) **Medium of Outreach:** It has a subscription base of 1.5 million and reach till states and territory. The various mediums of outreach used by the organization are research publications, media releases, social media, events, portal, VOCED Plus

- 5) **Structure:** There are 30 individuals working at the top level while a team of 85 professionals. There are people from national and across the world working on short-term basis
- 6) **Work on a sustainable model:** It works on profit making model and generate revenue by publications, consultancy projects
- 7) **Key functions:** The organization keeps a track of Australian youth between the age of 15-25 years and study their VET journey known as Longitudinal Survey of Australian Youth (LSAY). The organization is responsible in collection of primary data and undertakes analysis on the same. NCVER has effective information tracking on how students choose to move even after six months of training programme.
- 8) **Data utilization:**
 - Measure participation and outcomes from training and its performance
 - To understand key supply and demand issues and whether training needs sufficient
 - Data utilized to manage risk in the sector through tracking training completions

Key Learnings in Indian context

Operationalizing NSRD on the learnings from NCVER: NCVER was established in 1982 and has been providing key research inputs for Australian VET system while India is in process of establishing National Skills Research Division (NSRD) which will also have similar role in Indian context. NSRD can gain much from the experiential learnings of NCVER in terms of structure, type of research undertaken, funding pattern etc.

V. Meeting with NSW Skills Board (organization equivalent of the SSDM)

9.11.2015, Sydney

Brief about the organization: The NSW Skills Board advises the NSW Government on how best to meet the skills and training needs of NSW individuals, industry, regions and the economy. The Board provides independent, high level, strategic advice on the vocational education and training system in NSW.

Salient points

- 1) **Key Responsibility:** The Board is also responsible for overseeing major reform of the vocational education and training system in NSW, including the shift to a more contestable training market, funding allocations, training outcomes, quality assurance and budget sustainability under Smart and Skilled.
- 2) **Membership:** Members of the NSW Skills Board have been selected for their sound knowledge of skills and higher education, high-level experience of market operations, and strong understanding of financial, risk and project management.

- 3) **Research Committee-** Time series of secondary school students which tracks their journey post school. It also has a research team of 2-3 people
- 4) **NSW Quality Framework:** This is one of the smart and skilled reform system in which a checklist of quality indicators are provided and used
- 5) **Selection of Qualifications:** Board selects key qualifications for the state which includes a process of data analysis, wider consultations, forums on need of qualifications with industry and employers. The NSW board has selected 767 critical qualifications for the state. *The list of key qualifications is revised every year and new qualifications are also being added.*

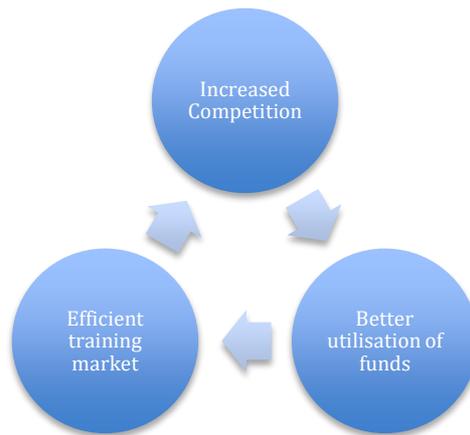


Fig: The process to boost competition in the VET system

Key Learnings in Indian context

Need to have competitive skilling ecosystem: Australia is soon going to bring reform in its VET system which will be more competitive and market driven. India can pick up from this idea and skilling ecosystem can be made more competitive which will ensure better utilization of funds and delivery of quality trainings.

Need to have representation of risk and project management on board: The NSW Skills Board has representation from diverse sections such as risk analysis, financial analysts. On the same lines, India should ensure representation of banks and financial management bodies so that the effective fund management of skill schemes can be tracked on continuous basis.

VI. Meeting with Australian Industry Group (AIG)

9.11.2015, Sydney

Brief about the organization: The Australian Industry Group (AIG) is a peak industry association in Australia which along with its affiliates represents the interests of more than 60,000 businesses. The AIG has been highly influential with all levels of government in the area of VET policy and implementation.

Salient Points

- 1) **Strong industry linkage:** The industry group has 8000 direct and 60,000 indirect industry affiliations. It involves very high level of industry representation and industry leadership
- 2) **Conducts Skill Gap Analysis on regular basis:** The organization conducts skill gap analysis after every 2 years which is always from the perspective of organizational needs and not on training and academic perspective
Skilled migration program is being undertaken by them
- 3) **Key strategy:** They follow the strategy of “train for tomorrow”
- 4) **Development of competencies:** Competencies are developed in real work situations and its done by the people involved in such roles
- 5) **ROI in training:** Research on ROI in training is very high in Australia
- 6) **Engagement with schools:** The organization is engaged with schools, course on vocational education and training and engagement with industry councils
Secondary schools are being asked to develop placement framework
- 7) **Mandate to contribute in Skill Fund:** Depending on the size of industry, every industry is expected to contribute to the Skill Fund which is mandatory
- 8) **Incentives to industries:** Government offer incentives to the industries for boosting and participating VET and on the job trainings

Key Learnings in Indian context

Need to learn from the strong industry linkages of AIG: It was found that Australia has a very strong industry interface in the VET system which has been through various direct and indirect affiliations. In India, we have not been able to achieve an active participation of industry in the skill development. This can be ensured by gaining from the insights adopted by Australian VET system such as mandate to contribute in Skill Fund.

ROI in training: The organization tries to attract industry participation by leveraging on the research on ROI in trainings which is very high in case of Australia. Hence, India can also come up with a research backed model which can populate the high ROI in training and can help tapping more industry players.

VII. Meeting with Manufacturing Skills Australia (MSA)

9.11.2015

Brief about the organization: It is Industry Skills Council in manufacturing sector and has a long history of industry engagement in education and training and workforce development. Its origins as a registered company go back to 1985.

Salient Points

- 1) **Composition:** It is comprised of 14 organizations, 7 employers and 7 unions. It has 11 Board of Directors (BOD)
- 2) **Key focus areas:** The organization mainly focuses on foundation skills, STEM Skills (Science, technical, engineering and mathematical skills) and transitional skills

- 3) **SMEs in manufacturing sector:** In Australia has 94% of manufacturing organizations are SMEs
- 4) **Industry engagement:** ISC ensures the strong industry engagement through Reference Committee, Technical Reference Group, inviting broader public consultations from industry, training providers, government, people representing regulatory bodies, licensing authority, analyzing the sectoral indicators.
- 5) **Tools for collecting industry validations:** The various media tools for collection of feedbacks are available templates, webinars for discussions, sectoral webinars, newsletter on skilling for populating skill news and views on policy documents

Key Learnings in Indian context

Integration of licensing norms in the training packages: The training packages developed by the MSA include the licensing and regulatory requirements the same is not followed in India. The same can be initiated in Indian context as there are many licensing and certifying norms which can be a part of training delivery module itself.

VIII. Meeting with Services Skill Council Australia

10.11.2015

Brief about the organization: This skills council include retail and wholesale, sport, fitness, community recreation, outdoor recreation, travel, tourism, meetings and events, hospitality, accommodation, restaurants and catering, holiday package etc.

Salient Points

- 1) Services Skill Council works on a strong database build by them through CRM
- 2) Data on ROI on skill development was compared before and after skill programs to attract SMEs
- 3) Qualifications are build on need basis
- 4) They have national standards for trainers

IX. Meeting with Master Plumbers Association of New South Wales-Group Training Organisation

10.11.2015

Brief about the organization: Master Plumbers Apprentices Limited (MPAL) is a group training company which employs of over 210 apprentices plumbers. It works with small businesses and individual contractors useful in relation to developing capacity of small business could be a model for the informal sector. GTOs employ apprentices and hire them out to contractors and small businesses who do not have the capacity to employ and train apprentices and trainees. The apprentices and trainees are rotated through a number of different companies so that they get exposure with experience.

Salient Points

- 1) **Inception:** The group scheme has been in operation since 1982 and has successfully completed over 1000 apprentice plumbers. There are 230 apprentices at present.
- 2) **All round industry exposure:** MPAL ensures that apprentices employed through the scheme are exposed to all aspects of the Plumbing industry.
- 3) **Skills tracker:** The organization has an electronic system in place to track weekly performance of apprentices despite of the fact that an apprentice is supervised or not
- 4) **Centre of Excellence:** The organisation is a centre of excellence for plumbing sector with stringent parameters of 100% pass marks and certifying plumbing course of three years duration

Key Learnings in Indian context

Transforming existing vocational training institutions on lines of MPAL: In Australia, MPAL is considered to be a centre of excellence due to its 360 degree industry exposure to the trainees, assessment as per ASQA, however, in India, on the job industry exposure is limited. Therefore, India should setup such centre of excellence like MPAL.

Focus on industry led assessment: The assessors in MPAL are full time industry people which ensure the training as per set industry standards. On the other hand, assessors or trainers in India lack latest industry experience. This concept of centre of excellence should be adopted by India.

X. Meeting with Sydney Institute of Technical and Further Education (TAFE)

11.11.2015

Brief about the organization: TAFE institutes are government providers of high quality vocationally relevant Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) under the Australian National Training system and the Australian Qualifications Framework. TAFE institutes collaborate closely with industry in Australia and internationally to provide Vocational Qualifications through formal on the job and off the job trainings.

Salient Points

- 1) **Largest training provider:** TAFE is the largest VET provider in Australia having ten institutes across the state
- 2) **Strong linkages:** TAFE works with government, industry & community experts to deliver new entrants to the workforce and re-skilling existing employees
- 3) **Total courses:** The institute run over 600 nationally recognized courses and training programs with employing approximately 5000 staff
- 4) **Offer customized trainings:** TAFE can design and deliver customized trainings to suit customer needs and offer wide flexibility in its courses

- 5) **Ensure quality assurance:** TAFE underpin the principles of quality assurance and continuous improvement through industry consultation, benchmarking against university qualifications, external and internal reviews

Key Learnings in Indian context

Need to establish a mechanism of continuous feedback similar to TAFE: TAFE is the largest training provider in Australia and in order to provide effective and customized training it invites continuous feedback through satisfaction surveys, evaluation of training programs and conduct impact analysis. In India, a robust system of feedback collection does not exist and the same needs to be established to have quality in the training delivery.

Need to have strong industry validations: In India, we are struggling to attract strong industry participation while in Australian all the VET systems and trainings need to be validated with respect to current industry demand. Hence, involvement of industry at every point in the VET system is important to ensure long-term result of the trainings.

Teacher Compliance Toolkit should be developed in order to upskill trainers: TAFE has developed a Teacher Compliance Toolkit to support teachers, curriculum developers and e-learning areas within Department of Education, Commissions and schools for the effective utilization of open educational resources (OER). However, in India, skilling is more a buzzword in urban areas. Therefore, there is a need to develop such toolkit which is to be made available in the state, districts and blocks so that we can upskill our existing trainers as we are already facing shortage of skilled trainers.

XI. Meeting with Sydney Institute OTEN Distance Education part of TAFE

11.11.2015

Brief about the organization: OTEN is the largest non-classroom (distance) education provider in Australia and a world leader in the use of cutting edge technologies and media in education. OTEN works in partnership with small and large businesses, local community and government organizations both in Australia and overseas to design and deliver customized training programs.

Salient Points

- 1) **Effective in distance education:** OTEN provides flexibility to fit your learning around your lifestyle. Many people who study with OTEN work full-time, or simply prefer to work outside the traditional classroom, where and when it suits them.
- 2) **Well-established credit pathways:** Once a candidate enrolls in a TAFE NSW qualification having previous skills and experience there is a provision of assessing and imparting for credit against the qualification.

Key Learnings in Indian context

India needs to have institutions like OTEN to address the vast skill gap: Since effective training is being delivered through OTEN in distance mode, India can build upon such institutions offering such trainings in remote areas making skill trainings reachable to larger population base.

Various media tools to be creatively used for imparting skills training in line with 'Digital India': OTEN uses different media interfaces like mobile applications, computer packages to impart skill trainings, conduct assessment through distance mode while India is way behind. Hence, establishing such platforms of effective media interface will help imparting skill trainings and the same will complement 'Digital India Campaign'.

Way Forward

- **NSDA to sign collaborative agreement with NCVET:** In order to have long term collaboration on research related issues NSDA has requested NCVET to sign a formal agreement which has been agreed upon by NCVET. However, a formal process for it would be initiated by NSDA. **(Action: NSDA)**
- **Access to all useful databases:** Most of the organizations we visited have a set of key deliverables such as reports, checklists, datasets, which they have agreed to share with NSDA. Hence, a formal communication will be started and a request for the transfer of such useful information will be done. **(Action: NSDA)**
- **Study the best practices of Australian VET system:** It has been observed that Australia has some of the best practices in terms of strong industry representation in ISCs, involvement of SMEs, research backed VET policy, and effective regulatory authority. Such best practices will be identified and implementable practices will be adopted.
- **Populating the learning to states (SSDMs) and other stakeholders:** Since the learnings of study visit is vital for policy formulation and implementation, the learnings will be shared with all such relevant stakeholders which can help them designing policies and effectively implementing training programmes.

Study visit delegation in one of the meeting

