



Report on Study Visit to Australia

4th November - 12th November

Introduction:

The project organised a study tour to Australia in order to build on the understanding of the TVET system. The purpose was to provide an overview of Australia's technical vocational education and training system, understand how industry drives the TVET agenda and how skill councils respond to industry needs, the role of government agencies and private sector, and possible collaboration between Australian and Indian counterparts. During the study tour, the participants were encouraged to reflect on the applicability of their learning in the Indian context. The study tour group was hosted by different organisations in Canberra and Sydney. These included Agri Food Skills Australia, Australian Government Department of Education and Training, Australian Skills Quality Authority, National Centre for Vocational Education and Research, New South Wales Skills Board, AI Group, Manufacturing Skills Australia, Services Skills Australia, Master Plumbers Association of New South Wales – Group Training Organisation, Sydney Institute of TAFE, TAFE Directors Association and Western Sydney Institute OTEN Distance Education.

The overall feedback of the participants on the content of the study tour and its applicability in India was positive. Participant's feedback via the feedback form indicates that the following concepts and ideas were found relevant:

- Implementation of a quality assurance framework in the line with the Australian quality framework.
- Risk profiling of training providers
- Make the TVET system 'outcomes oriented'.
- Industry participation in assessment
- Need of a complaint cell
- Industry Skills Fund
- Reducing the number of sector skill councils
- Adopting the model of Master Plumbers Association
- Validation of assessment tools by the industry
- Awareness campaign on training providers
- Limited placement linked training
- Environment scan studies
- Limited placement linked training
- Regulation of data collection
- Possible collaboration between NCVET and NSDA

The following meeting were held:

Agri Food Skills Australia

AgriFood Skills Australia is one of 11 independent, not-for-profit Industry Skills Councils (ISCs) established by the Australian Government Department of Industry. Led by industry and funded by government, AgriFood is charged with driving the skills and workforce development agenda across five main sectors: Rural and related industries, Food, beverage and pharmaceutical processing, Meat, Seafood, and Racing

The group found it interesting to see how the functioning of sector skill councils in Australia differs from that in India. The skill councils are responsible for development and implementations of training packages, workforce development strategies and industry's nationally endorsed qualifications. Skill councils develop assessment guidelines and occupational standards, but curricula development, assessment and certification are done by training providers. This is different from the scope of work of skill councils in India as in India standards, curricula, assessment all come under the purview of sector skill councils. Skill councils in Australia have also undergone a consolidation process wherein a number of skill councils were reduced by bringing related sectors together under one council. This is relevant for India as we have over 35 sector skill councils at the moment, which might have to be consolidated in future. Skill councils in Australia also engage in cross industry skilling, which is also relevant in Indian context also. It was also interesting to know that it is compulsory for industries to participate in national reporting which makes the data collection process much simpler and regulated for skill councils. This remains an area of concern in India.

Australian Government Department of Education and Training

The Australian Government Department of Education and Training is responsible for national policies and programmes that help Australians access quality early childhood education, school education, higher education, vocational education and training, international education and research.

The meeting was useful in understanding how access is provided to the TVET system by the Australian government and also the administration of the new initiative of implementing Unique Student Identifier Programme (USI). In this programme, every student will hold a Unique Number which will be common across all the education delivery points of the Government be it higher, vocational or primary education. This will enable the Government to study the progress of a student throughout the education system which will make robust Longitudinal Study of students feasible in the country. Another idea found useful by the group was that of Industry Skills Fund introduced by the Australian Government to encourage industry participation in skill training of existing manpower. This fund assists businesses in training and support services and to develop innovative training solutions. In this initiative, training grants are provided to the businesses to train people on co-contribution basis which vary as per the business type. The group also found it relevant to learn about the evolution of Australian Qualifications Framework and the process of referencing with European Qualifications Framework.

Australian Skills Quality Authority

As the national regulator for the vocational education and training (VET) sector, the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) 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).

Considering that India is also in the process of implementing a Quality Assurance Framework, learnings from ASQA were found very useful by the group. ASQA's principal tool to assess quality training is through site audits. It carries out compliance audits for all the training partners and publishes the results in public domain so that all the stakeholders are aware of the performance of training partners. The audits are based on standardized checklists, which are also available in public domain so that the implementing agencies are aware of the parameters on which they will be assessed. Risk profiling is done on the basis of audits and surprise checks. It houses a complaint cell, which registers the complaints of stakeholders regarding any aspect of training. It then conducts surprise checks on the defaulter mentioned in the complaint. The functioning of ASQA was very relevant for all the participants.

National Centre for Vocational Education and Research

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.

National Skills Development Agency under Ministry of Skills Development and Entrepreneurship in India is tasked with implementation of a national skills research division. Considering that, understanding the functioning of NCVER was of crucial importance for the group. Data collection in Australian VET system is much regulated. All the training providers are required to submit their data to NCVER and it is ASQA's responsibility to ensure that all the training providers do. NCVER provides systemic help. NCVER also builds links with similar international organisations to foster comparative analysis and collaborate on issues of mutual interest. Methodology, analysis, and statistical or research results are transparent and open to scrutiny in Australian TVET system. The group had engaging discussion on various topics with the presenter.

New South Wales Skills Board

THE NSW Skills Board advises the State Government on how to meet the skills and training needs of individuals, industry, regions and the economy in the state. The Board provides independent, high level, strategic advice on vocational education and training system in New South Wales.

The group learnt about the functioning of Skills board and the coordination between federal and state government which was very relevant. NSW allocates \$2.3 billion for expenditure on training. States pay approximately two thirds of Government Funding and Commonwealth pays one third. It has two reference groups to consult industry and training partners and determine research priorities. It is mandatory for industry to provide information to government, NCVET and skills board.

Australian Industry Group

The AI group 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.

AI Group functions in a similar way as CII and FICCI in India. The meeting was particularly useful to understand the approaches used to liaise with industry sectors and small and large businesses with regards to participation in training and to understand some key points for engaging industry in TVET. It was highlighted that one of the ways to ensure industry involvement is through cooperation of industry associations.

Manufacturing Skills Australia

Meeting with Manufacturing Skills Australia was of interest given the Indian Government's Make in India policy. Discussions were held around the labour market intelligence done by the skill council which focusses more on observing labour market and doing observatory analysis rather than forecasting numbers which are not always reliable. It was also interesting to see how the skill council collaborates with the industry.

Services Skills Australia

Services Skills Australia (SSA) is a not-for-profit, independent organisation, which supports skills and workforce development in the service industries. Industries include retail and wholesale, sport, fitness, community recreation, outdoor recreation, travel, tourism, meetings and events, hospitality, accommodation, restaurants and catering, holiday parks and resorts, hairdressing, beauty, floristry, community pharmacy and funeral services.

The meeting was useful in understanding how the SSA is responding to and collaborating with industry and how it has changed overtime. When developing nationally recognised training, they ensure that training is in step with the needs of employers and industry as a whole. To achieve this, they consult and engage with as broad a range of stakeholders as possible like: industry, both representative organisations and individual businesses; training professionals, including registered training organisations and trainers/assessors; industry regulators; and a range of state/territory and federal government bodies.

Master Plumbers Association of New South Wales – Group Training Organisation

Master Plumbers Association of NSW is one of the strongest specialist contracting organisations in the building and construction industry and is a highly active and vocal body in trade related matters. One of its main functions is to lobby vigorously on behalf of its membership in protecting and promoting the interests of the Plumbing Industry.

Group training organisation employ apprentices and hire them out to contractors and small business that 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 gain full exposure. This model was found very relevant by the participants as there is a huge informal sector in India that does not have the capacity to employ or train people. This model could be used to develop their capacity.

Sydney Institute of TAFE

The NSW Technical and Further Education Commission, known as TAFE NSW, is Australia's leading vocational education and training provider. TAFE supports the development of skills to enable people to successfully make the transition to work and improve their skills to meet the needs of industry. TAFE institutes collaborate closely with industry in Australia and internationally to provide vocational education through formal on job and off the job training including apprenticeships, traineeships, degree program and pathway programs with University Programs provide multiple entry and exit points for the student. TAFE Institutes are partially funded by government and are active in commercial work to bring in additional revenue.

Western Sydney Institute OTEN Distance Education

The Open Training and Education Network, OTEN, is the largest provider of distance education and vocational training in Australia. OTEN works in partnership with small & large businesses, local community and government organisations both in Australia and overseas to design and deliver customised training programs.

Considering the ambition of training large number of people in India with limited resources, distance education could be one of the options for India. The meeting proved very useful in understanding how distance education is conducted for workplace training, how formal on the job training at a distance is monitored and delivered and how assessments are also done over a distance.

Follow-up

- A possible collaboration between NSDA and NCVER. NCVER has been providing key research inputs for Australian VET system since 1982, while India is in process of establishing National Skills Research Division (NSRD) which will also have similar role in Indian context. A formal partnership between the two bodies will be very fruitful.
- Sharing of information – some of the reports, checklists and databases of some organisation visited during the study tour could be a useful source of information for NSDA. NSDA will initiate a formal conversation for the same purpose.

Some picture of the group from the study tour

