

TVET culture in Australia: The Bigger Picture

Ruchi Payal

PhD scholar, National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the TVET culture, Qualification Framework, TVET institutes, formal-informal structures, SDG successes, policies/programs, and future initiatives in the Australian Context. The article then delves into the financing, difficulties, reforms, and best practices that have an impact on the development and the future of TVET. The information was gathered from secondary sources such as UNESCO and other publications, books, journals, newspapers, existing literature, and data from numerous platforms. The research is primarily qualitative. It is an attempt to assess the current state of VETs in the country.

Keywords: TVET, Australia, Qualification Framework, UNESCO, SDGs.

Introduction

Australia is a large dry island-continent in the southern hemisphere of the planet, covering 7,617,930 sq. kms. With a population of around 24.8 million and with a 1.6 percent growth, more than 270 ethnic groups it has been successful in maintaining a healthy economy, with yearly GDP growth of 2.2 percent, but a 5.7 percent unemployment rate. The Educational Scenario shows that the gross enrolment ratio in elementary school is 101.3 percent (females=48.6%), whilst in secondary school, it rises to 153.9 percent (females=45.2 percent, with a minor fall) and in tertiary education, which includes all programs, it is 121.9 percent (females=57.6%) in 2017.

Strong partnerships between governments, VET institutions, and organisations that represent industry are the foundation of Australia's VET industry. State and territory governments as well as the Department of Education and Training (national department) of the Australian Government develop VET policies. 33.5 percent of students in secondary education are enrolled in a vocational education programme, with women making up 38 percent of these students. 16.1% of students in postsecondary education are enrolled in short-cycle education programmes, with female students making up 61.1% of this group. (Source: <http://uis.unesco.org/>)

The Australia Reconstructed report, which placed a strong emphasis on the value of education and skills in raising Australia's productivity and competitiveness abroad, published a formal framework for vocational education in that year. The establishment of an appropriate recognition system was also urged, as was the opening up of competition to the educators and skill providers.

Following that, in 1995, the *Australian Qualifications Framework* was developed and put into place in five phases to close the quality gap between the demands of the workplace and the institutions preparing their students for the workforce of tomorrow through their

education and training programmes. They will guarantee that the educational institutions in Australia are giving the students the necessary "skills sets."

It consists of ten levels. Upto level 6 there is no Academic Qualification that is specifically mentioned in the framework, for level 7- a Bachelor Degree is demanded, for level 8- Bachelor Degree (Hons); Graduate Certificate; Graduate Diploma will do, for level 9- minimum of Maters degree is needed, and for level 10- a Doctoral Degree is a must.

The specifics of TVET credentials, in terms of credentials are; For Level 1 there is a Certificate I, for Level 2 a Certificate II, for Level 3 a Certificate III, for Level 4 a Certificate IV, for Level 5 a Diploma, for Level 6 and 7 an Advanced Diploma, and for Levels 8, 9, and 10 a Vocational Graduate Certificate or Vocational Graduate Diploma. It was loose and enabling in its nature. The framework has three sub-frameworks: one for secondary education, one for vocational education and training, and one for higher education. It is quite extensive and elaborate in nature.

Out of these three, the *Australian Qualifications Framework's Vocational Education and Training sub-framework* was a crucial tool for promoting national coherence. It produced a single, widely accepted national qualification framework, which simplified implementation and expanded the scope of its follow-up research and reforms.

TVET System

Both formal and informal TVET organisations exist in Australia, and both of these types of organisations are actively educating their population in order to develop a market-based human capital that will support the country's overall development. A council consisting of the ministers in charge of industry and skills oversees the VET system in Australia on a national level. Private businesses participate in VET to a sufficient extent. The AISC offers recommendations to make sure that training in each industry is in line with the requirements of that industry's employers. To monitor the creation of industry training packages, a large number of new Service Skills Organizations have been founded with the support of Industry Reference Committees. An important component of TVET is training programmes. The organisational structure of both formal and informal cultures are described in the following section.

Formal TVET system

The formal TVET System involves 4 Certificates and diplomas, Advanced diplomas, associate degrees, vocational education degrees, certificates I, II, III, and IV. Their durations, admission requirements, levels, institutes, and qualifications are shown below in tabular forms.

At the lower secondary level, **Certificate I** and **Certificate II** programmes are available. The Certificate I programmes last about six months, and the Certificate II programmes last about a year. Academic requirements are typically nonexistent, with the exception of a few rare competitive certificate programmes that may demand that applicants successfully demonstrate their ability to read, write, and calculate by completing the Core Skills Profile for Adults (CSPA). They are instructed by private training providers, TAFE institutions, schools, and community education providers. Graduates of Certificate I and Certificate II programmes are eligible to continue on to higher certificate levels of vocational education and training.

At the upper secondary level, **Certificate III** courses are available. It is offered by private training providers, TAFE institutions, schools, and community education providers, and lasts for roughly 1-4 years. Academic qualifications are typically nonexistent, with the exception of a few rare competitive certificate programmes that may demand that applicants successfully demonstrate their mastery of reading, writing, and mathematics by completing the Core Skills Profile for Adults (CSPA). Graduates of Certificate III programmes are eligible to enrol in higher certificate programmes for vocational education and training as well as academic tertiary education.

At the post-secondary non-tertiary level, **Certificate IV** programmes can be completed in one to one and a half years. The completion of the necessary lower-level certificates, ongoing employment in the necessary field, or successful completion of the Core Skills Profile for Adults are all examples of acceptable academic requirements (CSPA). It is taught by private training providers, TAFE facilities, educational institutions, community-based organisations, for-profit businesses, and a few dual-sector universities. Graduates of Certificate IV programmes are eligible to continue on to tertiary academic or vocational education and training programmes.

At the tertiary level, a **degree in Vocational Education** is available after two to three years of study. The entry requirement is upper secondary graduates who have passed the entrance exam. The higher education programmes that are accredited to deliver vocational education are the ones that offer the degree (such as some dual-sector universities or TAFE).

At the tertiary level, universities, TAFE institutions, enterprise providers, and private training providers provide the **Associate Degree, Advanced Diploma, and Diploma**. The timeframes are as follows: 1-2 years for a diploma, 2-3 years for an advanced diploma, and 2-3 years for an associate degree. Admission requirements may include passing the relevant lower-level certificate(s), holding a job in the industry, or proving your proficiency in reading, writing, and math by passing the Core Skills Profile for Adults (CSPA).

Non-formal and informal TVET systems

Australian TVET is a very adaptable industry. Qualifications can be attained in Registered Training Organizations (RTOs) as well as in classrooms, workplaces, and other settings. Non-formal TVET is provided by a variety of providers from public, private, community, and industry based sectors. It can be attained from the community one belongs/stays in, the environment in which someone is working, the Civil society organizations, corporate trainings, staff training and some initiatives that are planned and organized by the various above mentioned sectors are other venues for non-formal TVET providing.

It can be offered full-time, part-time, online, at your own pace, or via distance learning. It can also become helpful through the availability of apprenticeships and *the recognition of prior learning*. Those who are interested can apply to RTOs to have their previously acquired informal/non-formal learnings, skill-sets, knowledge, and experiences formally assessed and recognised so they can use them to claim employment.

Type of TVET institutions

There are broadly 6 existing types of TVET institutions found in the nation. They can be classified as follows:

Type of institution	Education level	Ministry responsible	Number of institutions
TAFE Colleges and Institutes	Tertiary	State training authority	53
Private training Organizations	Tertiary	Private/ACPET	3,099
Community providers	Tertiary	Local	

government /CCA468 Universities Tertiary Commonwealth 15 Enterprise providers Tertiary Company/ERTO207 Schools Upper Secondary State education authority 442
 Source: unevoc.unesco.org, *UNEVOC TVET Country Profile Australia, 2018*

As can be seen from the above table, the nation has firmly embraced the privatisation of institutions. The preference for private institutions in education is obvious. According to the 2015 statistics, there are 26.8% of Australians aged 15 to 64 who participate in VET, with 66.3% of those students enrolled in courses through private training providers in Australia and 20.5% at TAFE institutions. (**Reference:** UNEVOC TVET Country profile, Australia)

Policies and Acts Form the Base of the Law

Australia's NQF has a legislative foundation because it is referenced in numerous laws and policies. Raising skill levels, reshaping the TVET systems, and enhancing the qualifications frameworks are the goals of the policies and frameworks that govern qualifications. TVET is a type of post-compulsory education and also training that focuses on imparting knowledge and skills necessary for the workforce but does not include degree-level or higher-level programmes offered by institutions of higher learning. It covers a broad range of professions and businesses that aid in generating a respectable living.

In order to analyse the evolution of TVET in the country, six major policies are used. The *Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Act of 2000*, which sought to provide Indigenous people with fair and appropriate educational outcomes, served as the catalyst for its beginning. (Source: www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2014C00732)

The Education Services for Overseas Students Act of 2000 was another step in this direction. It set rules and regulations for the operation of providers who provide courses to international students and required their registration. (Source: www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2016C00935)

The third is the Australian Technical Colleges (Flexibility in Achieving Australia's Skills Needs) Act 2005. It stipulated the creation and administration of Australian Technical Colleges, which would train young Australians in trade skills and offer them education and mentoring. For each Australian Technical College, this entails the creation of a governing council led by business, whose role it is to determine the college's principal and set the institution's strategic goals and performance goals. (Source: www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2009C00003)

The goal of the Skilling Australia's Workforce Act 2005, which was introduced in the same year, was to provide transitional plans for handing over duties currently held by the Australian Training Authority to the Department of Education, Employment, and Workplace Relations. (Source: www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2014C00400)

The next step in this direction was the introduction of the National Vocational Education and Training Regulator (Transitional Provisions) Act 2011, which connected funding from states and territories to a set of objectives and requirements for training outcomes. (Source: www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2015C00180)

After that, the VET Student Loans Act of 2016 was approved. It included provisions for student loans for vocational education and training, as well as for education and training that meets employer needs and improves employment outcomes. These provisions ensure that loans are only given to legitimate students. (Source: www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2016A00098)

The Australian government made an effort through these Acts to create a supportive and enabling environment for obtaining skill sets through Technical and Vocational Education Training.

Financing of education in Australia

The funding of both formal and informal VET is the joint responsibility of the National and State Government Education Departments. In 2014, 0.9% of total government spending went toward secondary and postsecondary nontertiary vocational education. Along with the involvement of the government, private businesses and individuals also contribute to the costs of training by buying the training packages and paying a fee for them, respectively. Additionally, there is the idea of "Fee-for-service," which aids TVET institutions in generating income from fees that people and businesses pay for particular training.

Any contracting and consulting fees for the training are included in the training that was offered. A significant portion of the funding for the institutions for skill development is provided by the central government, and this contribution is steadily growing.

Quality assurance

For each level of government, a different accreditation and quality assurance process is used. In contrast to State government accreditation bodies, which were in charge of issuing senior school certificates, the National Quality Council for Vocational Education and Training is involved in endorsing national training packages that were created by industry skills councils.

Agencies involved: This work is being done by a number of organisations, including Trades Recognition Australia, the State and Territory assessing authorities, and the Commonwealth Department of Education and Training.

For the creation, revision, and excellence of TVET curricula, the Australian Government Department of Education and Training and the Australian Industry and Skills Committee are in charge. IRCs are official organisations that examine the training plans and take into account the skill requirements of the various industries. Independent, specialised service providers known as Skills Service Organizations assist IRCs.

SDG thematic indicators related to TVET and skills

All the efforts for penetrating TVET skill set in Australia are more or less in the direction of attaining the SDG 4. According to the Data compiled by the NCVER 94 %, of adults have achieved at least the minimum level of digital literacy skills in 2013, while the Participation rate in technical-vocational programmes for the 15- to 24-years age group is 11.0% (2013). This can be counted as an achievement in creating a human capital that will further support national development.

Good practices and Challenges

Australia has a loose NQF that is not overly prescriptive but is still sufficiently thorough and offers a wide range of options to employers, students, and industries. Given that the training is given while keeping in mind the needs of employers, it has qualifications that are appropriate for the job and are regularly updated, ensuring job opportunities for the learners. However, the *NCVER* claims that TVET in that country is struggling with *low completion rates*, particularly in apprenticeships. Only about 50% of apprentices and trainees complete their training, and even then they do so with less-than-stellar credentials.

Additionally, there are holes in the VET sector's training programme. The effectiveness of trainings is harmed by this. The trainings are ongoing, and there are provisions for retraining older employees in newer skills as they enter the market. It plays a crucial role in ensuring that a portion of the population of their nation, particularly that group of workers who are not currently engaged in education, employment, or trainings, is not excluded and is instead exposed to the newer skills so they can become involved in the global economy by acquiring newer skill sets. However, striking a balance between the initial training of young people and the retraining of older workers is a significant challenge.

From the creation of policies to quality control, there is industry involvement at every stage. There are additional effective regulations in place that promote maximum responsiveness.

The earlier implemented acts have been evaluated in a timely manner to determine whether they are still relevant or have become obsolete, if there are any gaps in the policies that need to be filled, and whether any changes are necessary or not in light of the developments occurring around the world.

The Australian Apprenticeships Ambassadors programme is the most promising method. It seeks to improve the standing of TVET. It selects well-known people and top apprentices to serve as ambassadors and then plans events to promote the apprenticeship programmes. In order to prevent it from being viewed as inferior to other types of skills, the success stories are shared on larger platforms. Social media is used to advertise these events; as of 2017, 6 million Australians had access to the programme.

The functioning and development of VET institutes also become problematic due to the complexity that comes with the shared governance and funding responsibilities of the Centre, State, and Industries.

Although the Qualification Framework provides for the inter-sectoral dealings it is found by many researchers that the competency-based training in the vocational education and training has a negative impact on the higher education studies. It has created sectoral divides between higher education and vocational education because, given the nature of TVET, it focuses on the outputs, practical performance, and material security, but higher education is based on academic requirements, learning, and assessments within the prescribed syllabus.

There are other challenges of trust issues with those who learned skills from the TVET institutes, compared to those who have learned it from the local areas, training packages not being user-friendly, outlived their utility, marketizing the education, etc. so there is a need to look into these issues and rectify them as per their requirements.

Recent reforms

Various reforms are introduced according to the needs of the market and per the needs of the global scenarios. Some of the most crucial VET reforms are in the areas of funding and enhancing industry involvement in VET.

The National Partnership Agreement on Skills Reform, which was in effect from 2012 to 2017, had four main objectives: to increase the number of accessible training opportunities for Australians of working age; to develop a more equitable training system that will enable more people to participate in education and training; to increase sector transparency to enable a better understanding of VET activities; and, finally, to increase the number of people who are able to participate in education and training.

The National Partnership Agreement on Skills Reform, which ran from 2012 to 2017, had four main goals: increasing the number of accessible training opportunities for working-age Australians and creating a more equitable training system that allows more people to participate in education and training, increasing transparency within the sector that allows for a better understanding of VET activities, a more efficient VET sector that satisfies the needs of students, businesses, and industry while also raising the quality quotient of the sector to offer people, businesses, and industry relevant learning experiences and competencies.

Funding

Following the implementation of the National Partnership Agreement on Skills Reform, grants from the federal and state governments paid for roughly 75% of the total revenues of the publicly subsidised training activities. The remaining 25% comes from students and businesses that paid the full tuition at a publicly funded training facility like TAFE, as well as from overseas activities like offshore delivery and fees for supplemental services like consulting. This arrangement will be implemented by The Skilling Australia Fund in the latter part of 2017.

The main focus was on increasing industry participation in the VET sector in order to ensure that the country possesses a trained workforce that is needed for its economic growth and competing at the global level.

The CEOs of large corporations and representatives from industry peak organisations make up the Australian Industry and Skills Committee (AISC), which was founded in late 2015. Its goal was to put industry at the forefront of product development for training while also advising the government on quality standards. Service skills organisations (SSOs) were subordinate components of the industry reference committees (IRCs), which were chosen by the AISC to reflect the needs of particular industry subsectors. This shows that all major industry management has a direct line of communication with the government, committees are decentralised appropriately in accordance with needs, and sector-specific demands are also taken into account.

The VET system encourages industry participation at all levels. To better represent the viewpoint and needs of the industry, the Australian Industry and Skills Committee has been consolidated under the leadership of industry. The committee's goals are to advise the government on quality standards and to position business as a leader in product development education. In addition, the AISC created Service Skills Organizations (SSOs) to support the Industry Reference Committees (IRCs) and Industry Reference Committees (IRCs) in reflecting the needs of various industry sub-sectors.

A change has recently been made to the National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act of 2011. Although it is timely to evaluate previously adopted laws to determine whether they are useful or outdated, as well as whether any revisions are necessary in light of current global trends, it will take some additional time for this evaluation to make accurate statements about the NVETR's capabilities.

Conclusion

Given the trajectory of TVET in Australia, there is a consistent development, improvement and updation, increasing the coverage of students all over the nation, through institutes, policies, programs, and increasing awareness via social media. Its performance is dynamic

and applaudable. But at the same time, there is a lot more that needs to be done, and the various challenges explained above need to be taken care of. There is a need for an inclusive national VET system that is effectively governed with a clear delineation of roles and responsibilities of all the respective levels, adequate funding, timely analysis of outcomes, consideration of the gap areas, and other challenges. The approach to TVET should take into account the back-ground status of students, the baggages with which they are entering while being inclusive and participatory for all the stakeholders.

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