



Reinvigorating VET: Best Practice in Trade Apprenticeships

Peter Jacobson

2013 International Building and Construction Fellowship

An ISS Institute Fellowship sponsored by

Construction and Property Services Industry Skills Council (CPSISC)



ISS Institute
Level 1
189 Faraday Street
Carlton Vic
AUSTRALIA 3053

T 03 9347 4583
E info@issinstitute.org.au
W www.issinstitute.org.au

Published by International Specialised Skills Institute, Melbourne

Extract published on www.issinstitute.org.au

© Copyright ISS Institute November 2015

This publication is copyright. No part may be reproduced by any process except in accordance with the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

Whilst this report has been accepted by ISS Institute, ISS Institute cannot provide expert peer review of the report, and except as may be required by law no responsibility can be accepted by ISS Institute for the content of the report or any links therein, or omissions, typographical, print or photographic errors, or inaccuracies that may occur after publication or otherwise. ISS Institute do not accept responsibility for the consequences of any action taken or omitted to be taken by any person as a consequence of anything contained in, or omitted from, this report.

i. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Fellowship 'Reinvigorating VET: Best Practice in Apprenticeships' is centered on vocational trades training delivered at AQF Certificate II and III levels. The Fellowship research explored the transition from pre-apprenticeships into apprenticeships and how retention and training outcomes can be improved through new student support programs and models.

VET providers in the UK have significantly higher levels of student completion than Australia, despite an economy that has yet to recover from the 2008 Global Financial Crisis and youth unemployment rates of over 25 per cent. The Fellow aimed to investigate the performance and programs of these VET providers for the purposes of adopting similar strategies in Australia.

The Fellow undertook a series of College visits in the UK, as well as attending and participating the 2nd International Conference of the German Research Centre for Comparative Vocational Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T.) with a theme of 'Youth In Transition: Vet In Times Of Economic Crisis'.

The conference was held on 22- 24 September 2014 at the University of Cologne, Germany and included a presentation from the Fellow entitled 'Pre-vocational programs and Pre-Apprenticeships: The Australian Experience'.

The outcomes and benefits of this Fellowship included a greater understanding of the successful UK and Germany VET models that was identified as the original skills deficiency. It also highlighted and reinforced what Australian providers are currently doing well, allowing us to build on our existing framework.

The Fellow will implement his recommendations for new student support programs and models both at a local level, through his workplace Victoria University and at a national level, through collaboration with industry and professional associations. Since his presentation at conference, the Fellow has been invited to submit a discussion paper to G.R.E.A.T allowing for further knowledge transfer.

The research derived from this Fellowship is a stepping-stone to improving Australian apprenticeship retention and completion rates and creating 'Vocational Excellence', particularly in trades education.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	i. Executive Summary
i	ii. Abbreviations/Acronyms
ii	iii. definitions
1	1. Acknowledgements
1	Awarding Body – International Specialised Skills Institute (ISS Institute)
2	Fellowship Sponsor
2	Supporters
2	Employer Support
3	2. About the Fellow
5	3. Aims of the Fellowship Program
6	4. The Australian Context
6	Current Industry Context
6	SWOT Analysis
7	5. Identifying the Skills and Knowledge Enhancements Required
9	6. The International Experience
9	Visit One: New College Nottingham
10	Visit Two: Glasgow Kelvin College
11	Visit Three: Edinburgh College
12	Visit Four: 2nd International Conference of the German Research Center for Comparative Vocational Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T)
17	7. Knowledge Transfer: Applying the Outcomes
18	8. Recommendations
19	9. References
20	10. Attachments

ii. ABBREVIATIONS/ACRONYMS

AAC	Australian Apprenticeship Centre
AQF	Australian Qualifications Framework
ASCL	Australian Supply Chain and Logistics
BIBB	Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (Germany)
BICCIAB	Building Industry Consultative Council Industry Advisory Body
CBC	Competency Based Completions
CPSISC	Construction and Property Services Industry Skills Council
COE	Centre of Excellence
G.R.E.A.T	German Research Centre for Comparative Vocational Education and Training
ISC	Industry Skills Council
JSA	Job Services Australia
MoVE	Modelling Vocational Excellence
OH&S	Occupational Health and Safety
RTO	Registered Training Organisation
UNESCO	United Nations Organization for Education, Science and Culture
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VINO	VET Industry Network Organisation

iii. DEFINITIONS

Apprenticeship

A system of training regulated by law which combines on-the-job training and work experience while in paid employment with formal (usually off-the-job) training. The apprentice enters into a contract of training or training agreement with an employer that imposes mutual obligations on both parties.

Competency

Competency is the consistent application of knowledge and skill to the standard of performance required in the workplace.

Competency Based Completion

Apprenticeships and traineeships can be completed before the scheduled end date of the training contract if the apprentice or trainee has been assessed as competent and issued with a qualification by their training organisation. This is known as competency based completion.

Vocational Training

Training that emphasises skills and knowledge required for a particular job function or a trade.

1. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Fellow thanks the following individuals and organisations who gave generously of their time and their expertise to assist, advise and guide him throughout the Fellowship program.

Awarding Body – International Specialised Skills Institute (ISS Institute)

The International Specialised Skills Institute Inc is an independent, national organisation that for over two decades has worked with Australian governments, industry and education institutions to enable individuals to gain enhanced skills and experience in traditional trades, professions and leading-edge technologies.

At the heart of the ISS Institute are our Fellows. Under the **Overseas Applied Research Fellowship Program** the Fellows travel overseas. Upon their return, they are required to pass on what they have learnt by:

1. Preparing a detailed report for distribution to government departments, industry and educational institutions.
2. Recommending improvements to accredited educational courses.
3. Delivering training activities including workshops, conferences and forums.

Over 200 Australians have received Fellowships, across many industry sectors. In addition, recognised experts from overseas conduct training activities and events. To date, 22 leaders in their field have shared their expertise in Australia.

According to Skills Australia's 'Australian Workforce Futures: A National Workforce Development Strategy 2010':

Australia requires a highly skilled population to maintain and improve our economic position in the face of increasing global competition, and to have the skills to adapt to the introduction of new technology and rapid change.

International and Australian research indicates we need a deeper level of skills than currently exists in the Australian labour market to lift productivity. We need a workforce in which more people have skills, but also multiple and higher level skills and qualifications. Deepening skills across all occupations is crucial to achieving long-term productivity growth. It also reflects the recent trend for jobs to become more complex and the consequent increased demand for higher level skills. This trend is projected to continue regardless of whether we experience strong or weak economic growth in the future. Future environmental challenges will also create demand for more sustainability related skills across a range of industries and occupations.

In this context, the ISS Institute works with Fellows, industry and government to identify specific skills in Australia that require enhancing, where accredited courses are not available through Australian higher education institutions or other Registered Training Organisations. The Fellows' overseas experience sees them broadening and deepening their own professional practice, which they then share with their peers, industry and government upon their return. This is the focus of the ISS Institute's work.

For further information on our Fellows and our work see <http://www.issinstitute.org.au>.

Patron in Chief:

Lady Primrose Potter AC

Patrons:

Mr Tony Schiavello AO

Mr James MacKenzie

Founder/Board Member:

Sir James Gobbo AC, CVO

Board Chairman:

John Baker

Board Deputy Chair:

Rosemary O'Connor

Board Treasurer:

Jack O'Connell

Board Secretary:

David Wittner AO

Board Members:

Professor Amalia Di Iorio

Bella Irlight AM, CEO

Jon Onley

Alisia Romanin

1. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Jacobson also thanks the CEO (Bella Irlight AO) and staff of ISS Institute, Ken Greenhill and Paul Sumner for their assistance in planning and development of this Fellowship.

Fellowship Sponsor

The Construction and Property Services Industry Skills Council (CPSISC) is the Industry Skills Council for the Building and Construction Industry and related industries of Australia. The Fellow would like to thank them for providing funding support for this Fellowship.

Supporters

Individuals and organisations involved in the development of the overseas program and in the Fellowship submission were as follows:

- Professor Anne Jones, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic and Students), Victoria University
- Joan Whelan, Project Manager, CPSISC
- John McNally, Executive Officer, Building Industry Consultative Council Industry Advisory Body (BICCIAB).

Employer Support

The Fellow acknowledges the support, encouragement and time his colleagues at Victoria University have given him over the past 12 months while undertaking this Fellowship.

Organisations Impacted by the Fellowship

Government

- Higher Education and Skills Group (HESG)

Industry

- CPSISC
- Stanley/ Dewalt
- Milwaukee Tools
- Bowens

Professional Associations

- Housing Industry Association (HIA)
- Master Builders Association (MBA)
- Building Industry Consultative Council Industry Advisory Body (BICCIAB)

Education and Training

- Victoria University
- TAFESA

Community

- WorldSkills Australia

2. ABOUT THE FELLOW

Name Peter Jacobson
Employment Director of Training, Trades, Victoria University

Qualifications

- Bachelor of Education, La Trobe University,
- Diploma of Technical Teaching,
- Certificate IV in Training and Assessment (AE04),
- Certificate of Project Consulting,
- Facilitating Learning in the Workplace,
- Supply Chain Management, Deakin University,
- Six Sigma – Green Belt,
- Chair Academy/ Graduate Certificate in Leadership,
- OH&S, five day Representatives Course,

Memberships

Former Member of:

- Housing Industry Association (HIA)
- Supply Chain Logistics Association of Australia (SCLAA).

Biography

The Fellow commenced with Victoria University (VU) as Head of School, Industry Skills Training in November 2007. The Fellow has over 25 years experience as a TAFE Program Coordinator/ Teacher at Kangan Batman and Corporate Training Coordinator with the Ford Motor Company.

As Head of School at Industry Skills Training, the Fellow developed a Ready-to-Work course in conjunction with the transport industry that won the 2008 Australian Supply Chain and Logistics (ASCL) Training Education and Development Award.

In June 2009, the Jacobson became the Head of School of the School of Construction Industries. He managed a range of vocational education courses with the School offering specialist expertise in a variety of building and construction occupations from pre-employment and apprenticeship programs through to para-professional skill development. Trades included building design and construction; bricklaying; cabinet and furniture making; plumbing and gas fitting; and the sign industry.

Since 2010, the Fellow has been involved in the implementation and continuous improvement of VU's new competency based completion Apprentice delivery model, TradeApps.

In 2012, the Fellow was involved in the successful delivery of major projects at VU:

- The \$44million Sunshine Construction Futures Project, which has provided a new purpose-built, innovative facility to support the development of the building and construction industries in Melbourne's west
- The EcoLiving Centre Project that involved sustainably retrofitting an existing Californian bungalow serving as a Community House located at Selwyn Park, Albion, Victoria. The success of the initiative was recognised by the 2013 Green Gown Awards Australasia, with the project nominated as a finalist in the 'Skills for Sustainability' category.

2. ABOUT THE FELLOW

In 2013, Jacobson was appointed as Director of Training of the then newly created Trades College (now VET College) which as well as the existing construction courses also includes electrical, engineering and fabrication trades and hairdressing and specialist make up delivery.

3. AIMS OF THE FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

The purpose of the Fellowship program was to:

- Investigate and research the most effective student mentorship models in construction trades training across Europe and how effective they are at improving student completion and retention rates
- Identify and scope what contributes to Vocational Excellence and Centres of Excellence
- Canvass stakeholder views on excellence in trades training and the best ways to support/ implement excellence in training
- Gain an insight into Germany's Dual Vocational Education system at a general, industry and skill specific level
- Gain perspectives from organisations at all levels of vocational training; from small and medium-sized enterprises to major companies, vocational schools and training institutes and trade associations, that will be able to provide a well-rounded perspective of their training points of difference
- Explore different business and engagement models and identify new ways to optimise these models to increase industry participation
- Investigate how other international training institutions deal with reduced government funding and still meet the needs of industry in a demand driven Vocational Education and Training (VET) model.

The Fellowship will assist in filling the identified skills deficiencies in Australia by:

- Contributing to improvements in innovation, productivity and competitiveness in Australia's VET market. In doing so, we will encourage higher levels of both participation and attainment as well as continue to address skills shortages
- Encouraging and embedding a greater degree of industry engagement in the VET arena and a greater level of industry participation in training models
- Implementing and recommending the most suitable student mentorship strategies that will assist in increasing apprentice completion rates
- Increasing the capacity of VET teaching staff and workforce to deliver effective apprentice mentoring programs
- Develop and implement a culture of excellence in the trades and facilitate new ways of achieving successful outcomes for students.

4. THE AUSTRALIAN CONTEXT

Current Industry Context

According to the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) 2013 data, operating revenues for the public VET system in 2013 were \$8.519 billion, an increase of \$116.2 million (1.4 per cent) from 2012.¹ Currently, apprenticeship completion rates are at around 50 per cent. This is evidence that the VET sector is an increasing market with an increased demand for best practice models to be implemented in order to facilitate greater student outcomes.

Further to this, the construction industry remains the driving force of the Australian economy; it is supported by Reserve Bank policy to maintain low interest rates and a demand for housing and infrastructure projects.

This is against a backdrop of training reform that mirrors the European experience over the last 10 to 15 years. This was identified as a skills and knowledge deficiency and highlighted the critical importance of the Australian VET sector to model itself of successful international models. It is critical to identify how the Australian VET sector can continue to grow and provide the skills that industry need in a competitive market that is subject to greater regulation and funding cuts.

Peter, please use the Word Footnote reference style as per the example for all referencing. Then list them numerically in Section 9 in same sequence.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- New and innovative teaching and learning strategies.
- Effective and proven student mentorship models and programs.
- Identify 'excellence in trades' models.

Weaknesses

- High financial investment.
- High resource allocation.

Opportunities

- Development of new business and engagement models in a VET context.
- Greater student participation and retention rates.
- Produce high-quality trade graduates.

Threats

- Difficulty introducing new programs and models in a heavily regulated and entrenched VET sector.
- Insufficient support from Government, industry and other stakeholders.

¹ National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER), 2013

5. IDENTIFYING THE SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE ENHANCEMENTS REQUIRED

There are examples of areas in Australian industries where there are weaknesses in innovation, skills, knowledge, experience, policies and/or formal organisational structures to support the ongoing successful development and recognition of individuals and the particular sector.

The focus of all ISS Institute Fellowships is on applied research and investigation overseas by Australians. The main objective is to enable enhancement and improvement in skills and practice not currently available or implemented in Australia and the subsequent dissemination and sharing of those skills and recommendations throughout the relevant Australian industry, education, government bodies and the community.

Specific skill enhancement areas addressed through the Fellowship are as follows:

Skills Enhancement Area 1: Current international student mentorship models

- Conduct research into student mentorship models that have proven to increase student completion rates.
- Investigate Germany's VET model that has shown highly successful rates of apprenticeship participation and their potential application in Australia.
- Identify and explore apprenticeship mentorship models and how effective they are at improving student completion and retention rates.
- Assess all of the mentorship models for their appropriateness in the Australian VET system.

Action: Document research into effective student mentorship models and student retention strategies.

Action: Determine the two most suitable student mentorship models that could potentially be implemented in the Australian VET market and develop a proposed brief outline of each model.

Skills Enhancement Area 2: Insight into Germany's Dual System of Vocational Education and Training

- Research Germany's Dual System of Vocational Education and Training first hand – both at a general and at an industry and skill-specific level – and how successful it has been in alleviating their industry skills shortages.
- Investigate new VET business models. Given the rise of private RTOs, this is a critical time for us to discover and investigate new models of operation that serve both the student and industry.
- Canvass the views of key staff at the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB), Germany to obtain an overview of the main characteristics of Germany's Dual System of Vocational Education and Training.
- Canvass the views of Germany's VET stakeholders ranging from small to large enterprises, vocational schools, training institutes and trade associations. Anecdotal evidence will provide a first-hand view of the effectiveness of their system and how effective they engage with industry.
- Identify and assess potential business and industry engagement models currently operating in Germany, i.e. BMW Group Training Model.

Action: Document the main points of difference between Australia's VET system and Germany's VET System and assess the viability of implementing these initiatives.

Action: Based on this research, identify the most suitable new business and industry engagement models in the VET market that will increase VET participation and alleviate skills shortages in Australia.

5. IDENTIFYING THE SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE ENHANCEMENTS REQUIRED

Skills Enhancement Area 3: Scope the defining characteristics of Vocational Excellence

- Identify and scope what contributes to Vocational Excellence, including 'Centres of Excellence'. The intent is to build upon the WorldSkills Foundation's MoVE (Modelling Vocational Excellence) research project and canvass the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training in Germany to ascertain first-hand knowledge in excellence in vocational training.
- Interview representatives from the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB) in Germany to obtain their view of what makes vocational excellence and how they achieve this.
- Discover new ways of facilitating a culture of excellence in the trades.

Action: Based on this research, develop a draft list of recommendations for achieving 'Vocational Excellence' in Australia.

6. THE INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

The purpose of the overseas experience in Germany (district/region Name) and the UK (Nottingham, Edinburgh and Glasgow) was to identify and explore the skill deficiencies identified by the Fellow.

The research and information obtained will enable the Fellow to provide advice on best practice in VET, particularly trades apprenticeships, with a focus on:

- Student mentorship models and programs
- Vocational Excellence and Centres of Excellence
- Alternative VET business and industry engagement models
- Industry participation.

The Fellowship research included meetings with training providers and University staff in the UK as well as attendance and presentation at a VET Conference in Germany.

Visit One: New College Nottingham

Destination

The Fellow visited New College Nottingham, UK.

New College Nottingham (NCN) is one of the largest further education colleges in the UK, with a wide range of full and part-time study programs. NCN is also one of the largest providers of construction training in the Midlands.

Contact

The following staff member provided invaluable information to the Fellow during his tour of NCN:

- Andrew Lee, Academy Lead, Construction and Energy.

Objectives

To tour NCN's facilities as well as undertake a site inspection of the new facility under construction. The Fellow also aimed to gain an insight into NCN's delivery of apprenticeships and their links with employers and industry.

Outcomes

- The Fellow gained an overview of strategic building features taken into account when constructing their new educational facilities in order to improve apprenticeship delivery.
- The Fellow visited NCN's Student Support Area, a successful model that supports student retention and completion. This is where a team of Case Workers is dedicated to groups of students. They provide learning support, motivation, attendance checks and help students find employment.

6. THE INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

Visit Two: Glasgow Kelvin College

Destination

The Fellow visited Glasgow Kelvin College in Glasgow, Scotland.

Glasgow Kelvin College (GKC) delivers qualifications under the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) which are well recognised by employers and other learning organisations.

Contact

The following staff member provided invaluable information to the Fellow during his tour of GKC:

- John Kinlay, Senior Curriculum Manager.

Objectives

The Fellow aimed to tour GKC's facilities in order to gain an insight into their VET delivery that has been recently reformed due to recent legislative changes.

Outcomes

- The Fellow received a detail tour of their facilities and an overview from John Kinlay on the recent legislative change that has resulted in Reform 2012 and the Post-16 Education Reform Strategy. GKC has responded by implementing strategies to support students to prepare and stay in work, receive loans and encourage student retention and completion.
- The Post-16 Education Reform Strategy was implemented by the Scottish Government to improve life chances for young people, support economic growth and increase the number of jobs.
- The Reform Program is focused on five main areas:
 - » Learner journey
 - » College regionalisation
 - » Student support
 - » Employability
 - » Governance.
- GKC has an excellent VET delivery – they are building on their strong foundation so that more people are able to access the right learning for them, increasing their qualifications and leading them into employment outcomes.

Visit Three: Edinburgh College

Destination

The Fellow visited Edinburgh College in Edinburgh, Scotland.

Edinburgh College was formed in October 2012 following the merger of Edinburgh's Telford College, Jewel and Esk College and Stevenson College Edinburgh. Their student success rates have improved year-on-year for the last three years.

Contact

The following staff member provided invaluable information to the Fellow during his tour of Edinburgh College:

- Donald Calder, Edinburgh Training Group Manager.

Objectives

The Fellow aimed to tour their facilities and research their services in order to gain an insight into their VET delivery and their successful student support programs.

Outcomes

- At Edinburgh College, the Fellow was most impressed by the support services offered to a diverse student body: all ages, backgrounds and abilities.
- Their Learning Support Team help students to become more confident with skills such as planning projects, organising their time, giving presentations and revising. They also provide support for students who have a specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia or who have a sensory impairment or physical disability.
- They acknowledge that coming to College is a big decision and it can be difficult for students to balance life, work and study. Their Personal Support Team are in place to offer advice, counselling and ongoing support.
- They offer English Language Support and advice to students if English is not their first language.
- DisabledGo provide a free access guide to facilities and services in Edinburgh College. DisabledGo use 20 symbols designed in consultation with disabled people and represent important information that disabled people have said would be good to find out at a glance. All the venues visited by DisabledGo surveyors are given symbols; and you can narrow your search by filtering your results.
- The College has a well-enforced Equal Opportunities Policy that aims to prevent discrimination on the grounds of, for example, gender, disability, ethnic origin and sexual orientation and to promote equality for all the College community.
- Edinburgh College offers Employment Support, ensuring greater student outcomes. They work in partnership with Skills Development Scotland to help students at all stages with professional, impartial careers advice to discuss your options. Their Careers Advisers also help students to organise their job search and prepare their CV.
- After demonstrating that students can access an excellent package of support in further education, Edinburgh College has been awarded the Buttle UK Quality Mark, in recognition of its commitment to young people in and leaving care. This prestigious award is given to further education organisations that commit to supporting a young person who has been in care through helping them gain access to further and higher education and after successfully completing their studies, achieving their ambitions.

6. THE INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

Visit Four: 2nd International Conference of the German Research Center for Comparative Vocational Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T)

Destination

The Fellow attended and presented at the 2nd International Conference of G.R.E.A.T held at the University of Cologne, Germany from 22-24 September 2014. Refer to Attachment One – 2nd International Conference of G.R.E.A.T: Conference Programme.

The conference's main topic was 'Youth in Transition: Vocational Education and Training in Times of Economic Crisis'. The experts and attendees were from various countries all over the world, e.g. Australia, South Africa, the United States, China, India as well as many other Asian nations and numerous European countries.

Contact

The Conference was chaired by:

- Professor Dr Matthias Pilz, Chair of Economics and Business Education, University of Cologne.

Objectives

- The main objective of the conference was the exchange of experiences and knowledge between leading academics and experts in the field of VET.
- To present and share the Fellow's knowledge of the Australian VET environment through the presentation entitled 'Pre-vocational programs and Pre-Apprenticeships: The Australian Experience'.
- The three-day event had 135 conference participants providing networking opportunities and who discussed international questions, problems and perspectives on various VET issues, such as policy and comparative research, transitions, pre-vocational education, initial and further training, quality assurance in VET and more.

Outcomes

Day 1

- The first day of the conference started with a welcome statement from Prof Dr Werner Mellis, the Dean of the Faculty of Management, Economics and Social Sciences at the University of Cologne.
- Prof Dr Shyamal Majumdar, Head of UNESCO-UNEVOC Bonn, delivered an opening speech by introducing UNESCO's and UNESCO-UNEVOC's work in the field of TVET.
- After the keynote speeches of Prof Dr Lorna Unwin (University of London) with the title 'From Craftsmanship to 3-D Printing: Is Vocational Education and Training Research Keeping Pace with Change?' and Prof Dr Robert Lerman (American University, Washington DC) with regard to the question 'How and Why Do Firms Participate in Vocational Education?' there was a clustered session with three presentations in the afternoon.
- Later, most of the participants joined the evening program and visited a brewery with typical Cologne dishes and Kölsch-beer – providing opportunities for networking and further discussion on the day's VET themes.

6. THE INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE



DAY 1 – 2nd International Conference of G.R.E.A.T

Day 2

- The second day offered, besides the keynote speech of Prof Dr Paul Ryan (King's College, Cambridge University) on 'Economic Aspects of Apprenticeship', three parallel sessions with eight presentations and four working groups with 16 presentations.
- During the thematic sessions and working groups, the audience had the chance to discuss with the guest speakers as well as with other international experts.
- The working groups had different country-specific thematic priorities; inter alia, India and China. The Indian working group for example, was focused on skill development as well as on challenges and opportunities in the informal VET-sector that is also part of the scientific work of the Center for Modern Indian Studies, based at University of Cologne.
- At the end of the day, all moderators of the respective working groups presented their conclusion and gave so the audience the chance, to comprehend all contents of the different working groups from different countries.
- After a day of discussions and insights into different VET systems, all participants were invited to join the wine reception and to taste a choice of German wines – providing opportunities for networking and further discussion on the day's VET themes. Most of the guests joined the conference dinner at the restaurant Heising & Adelmann.

6. THE INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

Fellow's Presentation

On Day 2 of the conference, the Fellow delivered his presentation 'Pre-vocational programs and Pre-Apprenticeships: The Australian Experience'. Refer to Attachment Two: ISS Fellowship Presentation 2014.

As the only Australian attendee represented at the conference, the Fellow provided an invaluable insight into the Australian VET environment to an audience with limited to little knowledge of our VET model.

The Fellow presented an overview of the Australian Vocational Education and Training system in general and pre-apprenticeships in particular. It addressed a number of questions, including:

- Where do pre-apprenticeships sit in the Australian Qualification Framework (AQF)?
- What pathways are available from them into further study and how effectively do these pathways work?
- Does successful completion mean the graduate is more likely to successfully complete an apprenticeship?

Through verbal feedback both at the time of the conference and post-conference, the Fellow received a positive response and affirmation that current apprenticeship delivery strategies in Australia are well-regarded.

DAY 2 – 2nd International Conference of G.R.E.A.T



6. THE INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

Day 3

- The third and last day of the G.R.E.A.T Conference began with the keynote speeches of Prof Dr Tara S. Nayana (Indian Institute of Management Bangalore) on 'Initiatives in Skill Upgradation: The Case of Centers of Excellence (COE) in Industrial Training Institutes'. Afterwards the discussions were resumed in three parallel thematic sessions with eight presentations.
- Prof Dr Philipp Gonon (University of Zurich) delivered in his keynote speech on the one hand insights into the topic 'Transition Regimes and Vocational Education: A Comparative View'. On the other hand, Prof Gonon met the challenge to end in his speech with a conclusion of all the discussions that took place during the G.R.E.A.T Conference.
- The head of the Conference, Prof Dr Matthias Pilz, completed the event with a structured summary of the contributions. He worked out that each country was touched by the economic crises in a different way, but that the crisis during the last few years has effected especially the young generation. In many countries the youth unemployment rate is still very high and the job perspectives for young people are often limited.
- With regard to the discussions that took place during the conference, Prof Pilz concluded that VET alone cannot solve these problems, but, for example, it is able to support a smooth transition from school to work.
- Prof Pilz summarised: If the quality of VET is on a high level and the status and job expectations are good, VET can help to fill skill the gaps, especially on the intermediate skill level. Furthermore, VET can also become a realistic alternative to University for many people.



DAY 3 – 2nd International Conference of G.R.E.A.T



6. THE INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

Concluding Remarks

The Fellow's findings indicate that:

- VET student success can be directly attributed to the provision of services such as personal support, learning support, English language support, disability support and career/ employment support
- VET Reform must focus on the learner journey, college regionalisation, student support, employability and proper governance
- Current Australian VET strategies (i.e. student support, mentoring programs, etc) in place are well regarded on an international scale
- While German recognition about the importance of professional qualifications for young adults outside of Germany has grown, foreign interest in vocational education and training in Germany has also continually increased
- The Fellow affirmed the critical importance of international and comparative research in vocational education and training
- In order to successfully adapt international models, it was identified that the main focus for development, should be:
 - » To adopt best practice international approaches in a domestic VET environment through well-established processes and structures.
 - » Knowledge of foreign circumstances enables a clearer perspective on the domestic situation; learning from the mistakes of others is crucial to foreseeing possible obstacles.

7. KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER: APPLYING THE OUTCOMES

The outcomes of this Fellowship research include:

- Obtaining a firsthand understanding of effective student engagement, mentorship and retention programs and models for potential application in the Australian VET environment
- Observing best practice student models and programs in the UK and Germany
- Positive reinforcement of what Australian VET providers are currently doing well
- Increasing knowledge and awareness of successful VET business and industry engagement models
- Insight into how to better utilise VU's newly built Building and Construction facility to better suit industry needs and implement new and innovative teaching and learning strategies
- Developing a network of international VET contacts to share resources and strategies with and which can benefit VET in Australia, VU and industry in general
- Building upon 'excellence in trades' and producing high-quality graduates to implement across VU
- Gaining an insight into Germany's dual system of Vocational Education and Training.

The Fellow's research will be disseminated to ensure that VET students receive the necessary support from their RTO resulting in improved retention and completion rates.

Currently the Australian VET system has become fragmented and reduced due to national reform and budget cuts that have affected the funding allocated to different groups.

The results of this Fellowship will focus on managing student retention and completion within RTOs. This will be encouraged through support teams, teachers and specialists who will work with students and employers alike at the first and most recognised point of contact.

In order to convey the above recommendations, the Fellow will disseminate his research findings through presentations to a variety of stakeholders including government, industry associations, industry and education and training facilities.

The Fellow has since disseminated his findings with a presentation at the Apprenticeships Melbourne VINO session. The Fellow has also implemented local changes in VET delivery and student support in his workplace, Victoria University.

The Fellow has also been asked to submit a discussion paper that details his presentation at the G.R.E.A.T Conference for publication – further enhancing opportunities for information dissemination.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following specific recommendations are presented by the Fellow based on the findings of his research in order to meet the identified skills deficiencies:

- Contribute to improvements in apprenticeship recruitment processes and encourage greater industry involvement and participation through mentoring programs
- Establish an absolute commitment to improving apprenticeship retention and completion – this needs to become a top priority for Government, RTOs and Industry
- Invest in student support programs and staff in areas such as learning support, English language support, career support, disability support and equity
- Promote excellence in trades and encourage Centres of Excellence.

Government / Industry

Recommendations:

- The Fellow will provide advice and information to Government and industry groups to support improvements in VET innovation, productivity and competitiveness
- The Fellow will encourage and embed a greater degree of industry engagement in the VET arena and a greater level of industry participation in training models
- The Fellow will publish a discussion paper that details the Fellow's presentation at the G.R.E.A.T Conference. This will enhance opportunities for information dissemination and collaboration.

Education and Training

Recommendations:

- The Fellow will adopt local changes in their workplace (VU) and implement further student support strategies
- The Fellow will increase capacity of VET teaching staff (at VU) to deliver effective apprentice mentoring programs
- The Fellow is available to work with other Universities, VET Providers and Schools to inform their student strategies and recommend the most suitable student mentorship strategies that will assist in increasing apprentice completion rates.

Industry Associations

Recommendation:

- The Fellow has made presentations and disseminated information to relevant industry associations and stakeholders such as:
 - » Presentation to the Apprenticeships Melbourne VINO session 22nd October 2014
 - » Presentation and information dissemination to CPSISC when the report is printed.

ISS Institute

ISS Institute can provide contacts where needed to help the Fellow's findings reaching a greater audience than those stated.

9. REFERENCES

Articles and Reports

- European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop), 2009, Initial vocational education and training (IVET) in Europe: Review, CEDEFOP, Greece.
- WorldSkills Foundation, April 2005, What Contributes to Vocational Excellence, Madrid, Spain.

Websites

- German Research Center for Comparative Vocational Education and Training, Germany, viewed 16 January 2015, <<http://www.great.uni-koeln.de>>
- National Centre for Vocational Education Research, Australia, viewed 16 January 2015 <www.ncver.edu.au>
- WorldSkills International, Modelling Vocational Excellence, Netherlands, viewed 16 January 2015, <www.worldskills.org>

10. ATTACHMENTS

Attachment One

2nd International Conference of G.R.E.A.T: Conference Programme

Attachment Two

ISS Fellowship Presentation 2014

