



International
Specialised
Skills
Institute



Department of
Education & Training

SUPPORTING LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS:

Identifying strategies to improve participation
in VET and sustainable employment
opportunities within the hospitality industry

An International Specialised Skills Institute Fellowship

GURPREET SINGH

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1. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Fellow would like to thank the following individuals and organisations which generously gave their time and their expertise to assist, advise and guide him throughout this VET International Practitioner Fellowship.

International Specialised Skills Institute

The ISS Institute plays a pivotal role in creating value and opportunity, encouraging new thinking and early adoption of ideas and practice by investing in individuals.

The overarching aim of the ISS Institute is to support the development of a “Smarter Australia”. The Institute does this via the provision of Fellowships that provide the opportunity for Australians to undertake international skills development and applied research that will have a positive impact on Australian industry and the broader community.

The International Specialised Skills Institute was founded 28 years ago, by Sir James Gobbo AC, CVO, QC, and former Governor of Victoria, who had a vision of building a community of industry specialists who would lead the upskilling of the Australian workforce. The Fellowship program builds shared learning, leadership and innovation across the broad range of industry sectors worked with. Fellows are supported to disseminate learnings and ideas, facilitate change and advocate for best practice through the sharing of their Fellowship learnings with peers, colleagues, government, industry and community.

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led to positive change, the adoption of best practice approaches and new ways of working in Australia.

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Personal acknowledgements

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- » Ms Mona Leone - Director Business Development - Culinary Ability Awards, Scotland
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- » Dr Harshit Vallecha – Doctoral Research Professor – Indian Institute of Technology

- » Mr. Gary Coonar – Managing Director – Melbourne City Institute of Education
- » Ms. Vivienne O'Shannessy – Director - Curriculum and Learning Design MCIE
- » Scholars and participants at ICSNE 2019: International Conference on Special Needs Education held in Zurich Switzerland in July 2019
- » The Management and Staff of Lemon Tree Hotels (India) Limited (including but not limited to)
- » Mr Rattan Keswani - Deputy Managing Director LTH
- » Ms. Aradhana Lal - Vice President - Brand, Communications & Sustainability Initiatives LTH
- » Mr. R Hari – General Manager – Human Resources LTH
- » Partner organizations of Lemon Tree Hotels including:
 - » Action for Autism
 - » Muskaan NGO
 - » Sai Swayam Society
 - » Noida Deaf Society
 - » Heritage Xperimental Learning School

Professional Associations

- » Les Toques Blanches Executive Chefs Association
- » Australian Culinary Federation
- » Australian Institute of Technical Chefs
- » Quiet Network

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The characteristics of the hospitality industry are extremely dynamic and differ from other industries and the nature of the industry is labour intensive.

According to the Australian census data in 2016, the hospitality sector accounted for approximately 6.9% of Australia's working population. However, in the modern hospitality industry workforce, people who are disadvantaged are the largest minority: there is limited room for workers with disabilities or someone with special needs in the hospitality industry.

Ref: According to a 2018 Research Report by NCVET Disadvantaged learners are defined as indigenous learners, learners with a disability, learners from a culturally and linguistically diverse background and people who are unemployed and have low level of prior educational attainment (not having attained Year 12) (Lamb, et al., 2018 p. 7).

This research focused on 'Learners with Special Educational Needs' (referred to as LSNs) and the objective was to identify effective practices and strategies used by training organisations and Centres of Excellence in other countries to train and upskill this cohort in a Vocational Educational and Training (VET) Framework with a focus on the hospitality industry.

'Special Educational Needs' in this research refers to learners with physical and developmental disabilities; behavioural, emotional, and communication disorders; minor physical (hearing or visual impairments), intellectual disabilities and learning deficiencies. Intellectual disabilities further mean inadequate development of intellectual or cognitive functions including attention, learning, memory, sensory perceptual processing, conceptual learning, thinking and reasoning etc.

The research aimed to find ways for LSNs to improve participation in VET by improvising the learning outcomes and achieving overall success in employment opportunities in this sector.

The focus question was: How do we engage this cohort and improve their participation in a learning journey? Furthermore, having engaged them into programs, how do we ensure quality teaching and learning that they continue the journey and build confidence and skills to pathway on to employment and better life opportunities.

The Fellowship was undertaken in two distinct phases from December 2018 to July 2019. The first phase consisted of studying the highly acclaimed 'Inclusive Employment' initiative by one of the largest hospitality groups in India – Lemon Tree Hotels (LTH). The company has set a great example by integrating the social responsibility aspect into the core of their business model and leads by example of how industry can integrate the social values in their operations and give back to the society. Driving the LTH's recruitment to employ opportunity deprived or differently abled people, training them towards sustainable employment, creating a socially inclusive workplace is heartening and inspirational.

This trip in January 2019 consisted of visiting various hospitality venues managed by the group in New Delhi, Gurugram and Noida to meet with the management, staff and the social organisations which partner with them to drive this cause. It also included direct observations of training facilities observing candidates at work, meeting with managers and supervisors working directly with LSNs and getting to know the systems in place to assist these employees who are also fondly called as 'Happy People' within the organisation. The methodology included studying the

available support framework, intervention methods and activities used to support LSNs during the training journey and the employment processes.



Meeting with management at Lemon Tree



'Happy People' at work



The second part of this Fellowship was undertaken in Switzerland, July 2019 including visits to VET Providers in Lucerne and Zurich. These visits and meetings provided the Fellow with clear insights into their existing vocational education framework. The Fellow interviewed trainers, students and curriculum managers, observed classes and examined teaching and learning and assessment materials.

The Fellow also attended the International Conference on Special Needs Education held in Zurich in July 2019. This conference is a premier interdisciplinary platform to meet researchers, practitioners and educators in the field of Special Needs Education to present and discuss the most recent innovations, trends, and concerns as well as practical challenges encountered and solutions.

We cannot pick up and replicate other countries' pedagogy into our own; the objective was to look at what is useful and successful about existing programs, identifying how we can embed alternative pedagogical characteristics that work well anywhere in Australia and how the learnings can be applied in the present VET practices related to LSN's.

Learnings from this Fellowship show that there are simple patterns of successful practices to engage more effectively with LSNs which do not require duplication of existing methods or supplementary infrastructure in the Hospitality industry perspective. The human mind is designed for learning. If we understand the conditions that foster or impede learning in these individuals, we can assist those who have difficulties in understanding and comprehension.

Substantial similarities were noticed in the approach to developing strategies and pedagogy towards LSNs in each of the settings visited:

- » strong partnership between education providers and employers
- » Assessments of LSNs prior to starting the VET program – jobs mapping to LSNs abilities and wishes
- » Contextualised Learning Programs (CLP) based on specific nature and needs of LSNs and vocational requirements
- » Focus on shorter employability skills sets, instead of complete qualifications outcomes
- » Engagement with actual workplaces and hands-on learning approach in a real work environment

- » Training towards self-reliance and confidence building - Vocational programs aimed at capacity building of LSNs towards gaining employability skills and incorporating life skills programs to facilitate adaptive functioning and to enhance their productivity

- » Family support and social environment plays a vital role

The successful inclusion in the mainstream education is often a combination of multiple factors including functional ability of the learner, the ability to learn in a mainstream classroom, the skills required to negotiate the varied social factors as well as training and sensitisation of teachers and subordinates.

The most commonly cited challenge in hiring people with special needs is the "nature of the work" however through some simple measures, learners facing these challenges can complete studies successfully in specific skills sets and get employed with the right skills and knowledge to perform productively, whilst building the social and life skills to navigate and contribute actively within the community.

3. FELLOWSHIP BACKGROUND

Fellowship context

The aim of the Fellowship was to identify effective practices and strategies to train and upskill 'Learners with special needs' in a Vocational Educational & Training Framework thus leading them to sustainable employment opportunities in the hospitality industry.

During the Fellow's hospitality professional career, Gurpreet has been directly involved either in LSNs training, or in their recruitment for over 19 years. It has been a persistent experience that at times, has not achieved the desired results due to various factors including type of special needs, lack of support framework available, and/or mindset of the people involved.

Many hospitality industry reports state that a shrinking labour force is one of the biggest challenges facing the industry in recent years due to a high staff turnover. In this new era of unprecedented levels of projects, development and growth of hospitality industry in Australia, there is a need to develop larger workforce to manage and support this growth opportunity as effectively as possible. With the increasing industry demands, the challenge of skilled staff shortage will only grow in the coming years. Nevertheless, there is still limited room for workers with disabilities or someone with special needs. This may be due to mindset of people involved, limited resources available to support the additional requirements of workers with special needs including supplementary infrastructure required to undertake any task in a safe manner, concerns about the inability to perform due to "nature of the work", detailed supervision requirements etc.

The above is reinforced by a study conducted by Cornell HR review within the hospitality industry. The study argues that when employees with disabilities have been properly accommodated, they exhibit high job retention, which directly benefits employers. Once the company makes that initial investment to train and accommodate a differently abled worker, they are more likely to gain a reliable and loyal employee. That loyalty will save them from the costs associated with the high turnover rates prevalent within the hospitality industry. The Australian hospitality industry is no different to other countries in this aspect. Thus, disability inclusiveness should be a key strategy to focus on when designing and implementing training strategies for delivery of hospitality and tourism related vocational courses in Australia.

Fellowship methodology

The methodology for the Fellowship included carrying out visits to a range of organisations that included operational hospitality venues, practice based education services, policy and implementation departments and attendance at an adult learning conference.

The Fellowship was undertaken in two distinct stages in December 2018 and July 2019. It involved multiple components including study of the current training structures in place to train and upskill people with disabilities in the hospitality industry. The research also included potential impacts on safety, cost, efficiency, service quality and management of employing people with special needs. Potential and limitations of people with different types and degrees of disabilities regarding jobs in the hospitality industry were also included.

The first part consisted of studying the highly acclaimed 'Inclusive Employment' initiative by one of the largest hospitality groups in India, – Lemon Tree Hotels. This trip consisted of visits to various hospitality venues managed by the group, to meet with the management, staff and their associate partners. The company has set a great example by integrating corporate social responsibility into the core of their business model and leads by example of how industry can integrate the social values in their operations and give back to society. The company recruitment drives to employ opportunity for deprived or differently-abled people training them towards sustainable employment, creating a socially inclusive workplace: this is heartening and inspirational. The 'Inclusive Employment Programme' has been taken to audacious levels, employing more than 600 people who are differently-abled in various aspects of hospitality work environment.

The visits included meeting the management, studying the training processes and infrastructure, and meeting with the social organisations which partner with them to drive this cause. It also included direct observations of training facilities and monitoring candidates at work, meeting with managers and supervisors working with this cohort and examining the systems in place to assist these employees who are also fondly called as 'Happy People' within the organisation. The methodology included studying the available support framework, intervention methods and activities used to support learners with special needs during the training journey and the employment processes.

The second part of this Fellowship was undertaken with a trip to Switzerland including visits to Vocational and Higher Education Providers in Lucerne and Zurich. These visits and meetings provided the Fellow with insights into the existing vocational education framework in Switzerland. The Fellow interviewed trainers, students and curriculum managers, observed classes and examined teaching, learning and assessment materials. During this trip the Fellow also attended the International Conference on Special Needs Education held in Zurich in July 2019. This conference is a premier interdisciplinary platform to meet researchers, practitioners and educators in the fields of Special Needs Education, to present

and discuss the most recent innovations, trends, and concerns as well as practical challenges encountered, and solutions adopted.

Fellow biography

Upon graduating in 1999 in Hotel Management, Gurpreet considered himself privileged to be awarded opportunities to travel and work across countries, cultures and organisations. His work experience includes Accor Asia Pacific Hotels, Eurasia Hongkong, Apavou Hotels Mauritius, Stellenbosch Hotel South Africa, Imabari Kokusai Hotel Japan, Ventures Hospitality Group India, ALH Hotels Australia etc.

Workforce recruitment, training and upskilling have always been an integral part of his job roles and management positions he has held over the last 20 years in this industry. Since 2012, Gurpreet has been involved in vocational education and training in Commercial Cookery and Hospitality Management in the Australian VET sector and organisations including MCIE, HOLMESGLEN TAFE, ANIBT etc.

Currently employed by MCIE as Head of Department –Faculty of Hospitality and Business, and as a Trainer & Assessor with HOLMESGLEN TAFE, Gurpreet has also been active in the amplification of dialogue between industry and training bodies. He represents professional associations including Australian Culinary Federation, Les Toques Blanches Executive Chefs, the Australian Institute of Technical Chefs, and as a panel member to give his recommendations to the governing bodies regarding education and employment in hospitality sectors. He has been involved in the ongoing review of the commercial cookery and hospitality qualifications in the SIT Tourism, Travel and Hospitality Training Package overseen by SkillsIQ which is working towards developing the standards and training package under the direction of the Tourism, Travel and Hospitality Industry Reference Committee (IRC) and Australian Government.

Since the Fellow's early days in this industry, Gurpreet gained valuable experiences either directly in training of LSNs or in their recruitment. However there also have been times when he did not achieve the desired results. At present, Gurpreet is directly involved in the training journey of two LSNs, an apprentice (work-based) who is hearing impaired and currently employed and another learner who is visually impaired but seeking employment. The learning from this research is helping to assist these learners and is applied in their context.

Professional Memberships include:

- » Australian Culinary Federation Victoria Chapter
- » Les Toques Blanches Executive Chef Club
- » Australian Institute of Technical Chefs
- » QuIET network Victoria – Quality in Education & Training
- » Australian Vocational Education and Training Research Association (AVETRA)
- » Australian Vocation Education and Training Professional Association (AVETPA)

Abbreviations / Acronyms / Definitions

ANIBT	Australian National Institute of Business and Technology
AQF	Australian Qualification Framework
AVTEPA	Australian Vocation Education and Training Professionals Association
AVETRA	Australian Vocational Education and Training Research Association
CLP	Contextualised Learning Program

DET	Department of Education and Training
EAER	Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research (Switzerland)
ICSNE	International Conference on Special Needs Education
IRC	Industry Reference Committee
ISC	Industry Skills Council
ISL	Indian Sign Language
ISS	Institute International Specialised Skills Institute
L&D	Learning and Development
LLN	Language, Literacy, and Numeracy
LSNs	Learners with special needs
LTH	Lemon Tree Hotels
MCIE	Melbourne City Institute of Education
NCVER	National Centre for Vocational Education Research
OHS	Occupational Health and Safety
PE	Professional Education
PPP	Public-Private Partnership

SERI	State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (Switzerland)
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VPET	Vocational and professional education and training
WASET	World Academy of Science, Engineering and Technology

4. FELLOWSHIP LEARNINGS

Hospitality Industry and Employees with Special Needs

The characteristics of the hospitality industry are extremely dynamic and differ from other industries. Many recent hospitality industry reports state that unprecedented growth and a shrinking labour force will continue to be the biggest challenges facing the industry in the upcoming years. Additionally, the hospitality industry has extremely high employee turnover rates. While the annual turnover rate for all industry sectors was 39.6% in 2016 the leisure and hospitality sectors averaged 64.6% according to Cornell HR Review.

In this era of unprecedented levels of development and growth in the hospitality sector in Australia, there is an urgent need for better workforce planning including cross and up-skilling the existing workforce to manage and support this growth opportunity effectively.

This current skills gap can potentially be bridged by recruitment policies and employability programs that support opportunities for partially-abled candidates.

With increasing industry demands, the challenge of skilled staff shortage will only grow in the coming years however there is still limited room for workers with disabilities or someone with special needs. This may be due to mindset of people involved, limited resources available to support the additional requirements of workers with special needs including supplementary infrastructure required to undertake any task in a safe manner, concerns about the inability to perform due to “nature of the work”, detailed supervision requirements etc.

The Fellowship was undertaken in two distinct phases and involved multiple components including the study of the current training structures in place to train and upskill people with special needs in the hospitality industry. In both stages, the systems that were studied demonstrates that vocational education success is based on strong partnership between providers and employers.

Lemon Tree Hotels India



As part of LTH Corporate Social Responsibility, they focus on creating a socially inclusive work environment which seeks to bring in people of different backgrounds, abilities and ethnicities and offer them work as a unified team with a common goal.

The LTH recruitment drives to employ opportunity deprived or differently abled

people and training them towards sustainable employment thus creating a socially inclusive workplace, is heartening and inspirational.

Key Learnings:

- » Supporting disadvantaged learners is successful when it is an institution-wide commitment.
- » Including disabilities in corporate diversity plans to demonstrate that top management is committed to employing people with disabilities. This commitment trickles down to managers and supervisors as they make recruitment and hiring decisions.
- » Defined set of practices in place providing ongoing learning support and attaching more experienced staff with high-need learners, and thus reducing the scope of ad-hoc practices.
- » Sensitivity training for all employees: as part of standard orientation, every fully abled employee at LTH undergoes a training program in sign language, to be able to work with special need employees in their areas.
- » Training has a three-tier approach in LTH: personal, social and vocational
- » Individual Learning Programs based on specific nature and needs of LSNs - The jobs or tasks appointed to LSNs should not deteriorate the disability or special needs of the candidate but working towards confidence building. Importance is placed on the interest or passion of the LSNs for a job.
- » Training with focus on specific skills sets and smaller targets with ample time to practice the skills. By considering the skills in a positive manner, many of the deficit areas can also be considered as strengths.
- » Specialised Training Materials: An example of specialised training material / delivery system is the creation and implementation of a visual aid (video /film). For all processes in Housekeeping and Food & Beverage Service, training modules that were written for employees have been enhanced with the use of

Sign Language, (ISL) in the video. This has helped to increase the understanding of tasks and is leading to greater productivity.

- » Training aids such as 'Me Book' assists the LSNs to remember the jobs and remain focused on their tasks.



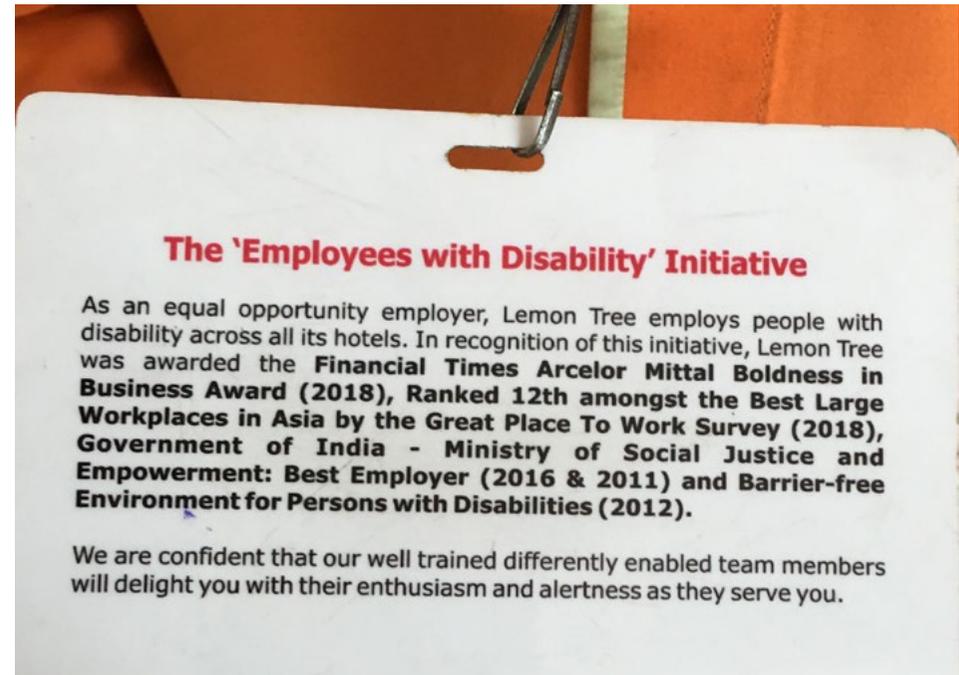
'Me Books'

- » Employer's benefits—LTH has proven with records that the staff retention rates are higher for LSNs once they are trained and employed.
- » Empathy, not sympathy, can create a loyal talent pool. It's differently abled, not disabled.
- » Comparatively better work performances are observed, and productivity ratios are recorded in LSNs in comparison to fully abled employees due to low distraction levels.
- » Allow the flexibility to get their job done in a variety of different ways - If employees with disabilities are expected to work in different departments, managers should plan and have reasonable accommodations for those tasks on hand.

For example, if a front-desk employee with a visual impairment is expected to work at the concierge desk, that computer should also be preemptively set up with the necessary assistive technologies.

- » Specialised jobs which critically require a certain sense or ability may not be suitable for all LSNs who do not possess any sense or ability even with the aid of technology or by other means. E.g.: a LSN with visual impairment may not be appropriate in a commercial kitchen which is a high-risk area due to the nature of the work and work environment. However, apart from such extreme and obvious cases, experts mostly agree that LSNs can fulfill any task in the hospitality industry if their professional knowledge and skills fit those tasks.
- » Multi-Tasking: In many hospitality environments, employees are expected to multitask on a regular basis. Some employees, when necessary, work far outside of their job description (e.g., cover shifts in a different department) however that can be a limitation with LSNs
- » Family support and social environment plays a vital role – Involvement of parents and families can be beneficial. Better external support helps to impart effective training thus raising levels of engagement and completion.
- » Issues related to transportation should be part of the considerations in the hospitality industry especially for LSNs. Transportation to and from the workplace can be a major barrier to retaining workers with special needs specially with the high prevalence of shift work and odd working hours.

Guests have shown tremendous support and appreciation for our inclusive hiring approach and have often given us excellent feedback – Aradhana Lal, VP Brand, Communications & Sustainability Initiatives – Lemon Tree Hotels



Neck tag

SWITZERLAND

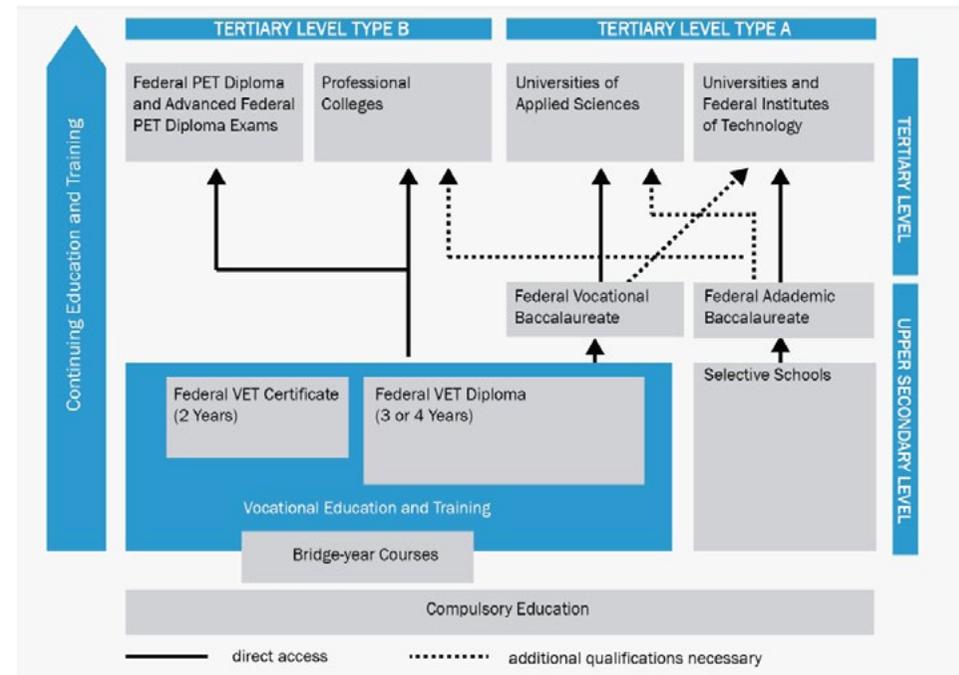
BHMS Hotel Management School, Canton of Lucerne

Swiss Institute for Management & Hospitality, Canton of Lucerne

Switzerland is one of several European countries with a “dual” vocational education and training (VET) system in which students combine learning in school with learning in workplace settings. Swiss VET system at federal level gives high priority to the integration of students with special educational needs in an open labour market.

Vocational and Professional Education and Training (VPET) in Switzerland is the joint responsibility of the confederation, the cantons and professional organisations. This is called the public-private partnership of VPET. Professional organisations are the umbrella term used for the non-governmental stakeholders in VPET. The professional organisations are responsible for the development of qualifications and they ensure the involvement of the economy. The cantons are represented at the national level through the Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education (EDK). The Confederation is represented by the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI).

FIGURE 1: THE SWISS EDUCATION SYSTEM



The SWISS Education System



The SWISS VPET System

Confederation

Representing the Confederation, the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) within the Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research (EAER) is the federal government specialised agency for national and international matters concerning education, research and innovation policy. SERI is responsible for regulating and co-funding the VET and PE sectors, for example by defining the duration of the programs and guaranteeing the national recognition of qualifications.

Cantons

The cantons are generally responsible for education and training in Switzerland. The Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education consolidates and represents

the inter-cantonal cooperation at national level. There are 26 cantonal VET offices responsible for implementing VET at cantonal level. The cantons are responsible for vocational, educational and career guidance service and provide information and advice to both young people and adults. They also run vocational schools, which offer classroom instruction for both dual-track (i.e. combined work and school) and school-based (i.e. full-time classroom instruction, no apprenticeship) VET programs. In addition, vocational schools prepare learners for the Federal Vocational Baccalaureate Examination.

Professional organisations

“Professional organisations” is an umbrella term that is used for the non-governmental stakeholders in VPET: Trade associations / industry organisations, national umbrella organisations, VET and PE providers and companies. Mostly, trade associations and industry organisations are responsible for the process of developing new training opportunities as well as starting revision processes in VET. Along with trade associations and industry organisations, the national umbrella organisations and VET and PE providers are involved in decision-making processes on the further development of VET and PE. Professional organisations define education and training content, establish national qualification procedures and are heavily involved in the development of syllabuses.

Public-Private Partnership

The public-private partnership (PPP) of VPET takes place at three levels: steering, learning environment and enforcement.

At the steering level, the PPP is conducted based on the principles of consensus. The PPP oversees the enactment of VET ordinances, the execution of provisions and the approval of pilot studies in VET.

At the learning environment and enforcement level, including implementation, the PPP involves the validation of non-formal learning, the granting of accreditations

for different VET programs in vocational schools, conducting qualification procedures, the involvement of vocational schools in branch courses, equality for VET professionals, and cooperation between the learning locations.

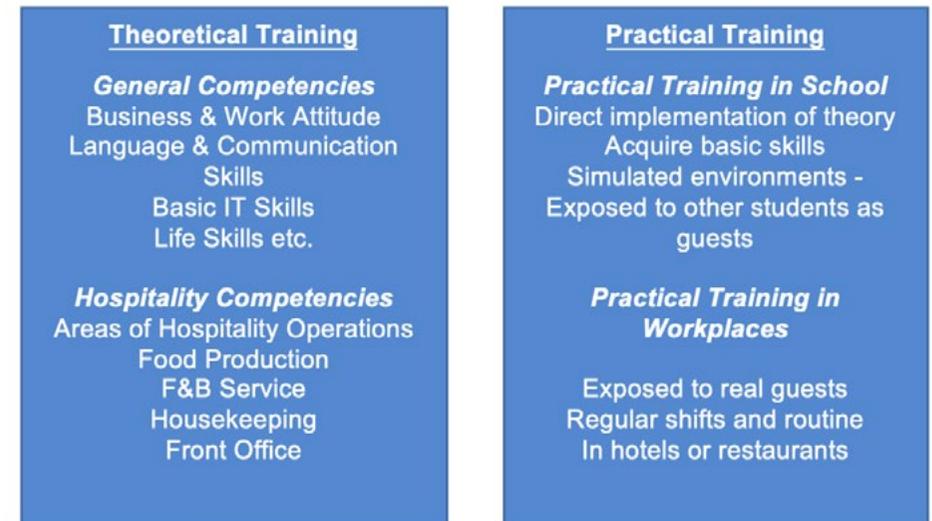
Switzerland's highly developed VET system has many strengths. In particular:

- » the system is strongly employer and market driven
- » School and work-based learning are well integrated.
- » It immediately puts young people in a setting with adults, where they are treated differently than in school and given more responsibility coupled with lots of coaching and support.
- » The learning is much more hands-on, contextualised, and applied: academic concepts are made real
- » Vocational teachers and trainers, examiners and directors are well prepared and trained to work with LSNs.

Meeting with David Hailstone, – CEO and Chief Culture Officer at Swiss Institute for Management & Hospitality, Canton of Lucerne, Switzerland



The Swiss model for VET in hospitality training for LSNs



Key Learnings:

- » Prevocational training – Education which is mainly designed to introduce participants including LSNs to the world of work and to prepare them for entry into vocational programs.
- » Orientation programs to introduce nature and areas of work in a hospitality environment prior to commencing the vocational learning.
- » Learner centered approaches – Contextualised training strategies based on job mapping to capabilities of the individuals has been found to be a very effective tool.
- » Focus on employment skill sets and flexible methods to achieve VET qualifications –The VET settings are flexible, ensuring that the structure and duration of the VET programs responds to learner's needs. For LSNs break down the qualification requirements into short skill sets and include opportunities to practice at real workplaces.

- » Strategies focused on introduction and completion of shorter employability skills sets, specially at the beginning of vocational education, is considered more effective thus leading the LSNs to be employed and practice gained skills in real workplaces.
- » Upon completion of fundamental knowledge, emphasis on practical learning under supervision which may happen in a simulated environment however the records indicate that most successful learning outcomes are achieved at actual workplaces
- » Move beyond the walls of classroom and involve parents and families for additional support
- » Career guidance and counselling is systematic and professional.
- » Motivation on the side of the training, the development of social competence and a supportive VET environment plays a key factor in success on facilitating the transition to the open labour market.
- » Moving towards self-reliance - By increasing education around the challenges and mapping to individual's capabilities, VET schools and employers can support learners by providing contextualised training, building relationships based on trust, providing and maintaining a safe environment for these learners, and adjusting administrative and policy approaches. Better support helps to impart effective training thus raising levels of engagement and completion.
- » Training focused on employability skills offer significant positive employment benefits for people with a disability who complete a VET qualification
- » Additional training and education are necessary for VET teachers to help increase knowledge and awareness in working with LSNs and to promote success. Practices indicate that teachers and practitioners who acquire specialist training and can adapt their pedagogical methods to match the additional requirements of LSNs achieve desired results more efficiently.
- » VET providers have educational measures in place that prevent or reduce cases of failure or withdrawal by finding new educational alternatives for disengaged learners.

- » Employer concerns toward hiring LSNs varied significantly by employer size, with employers with more workers being more likely to hire those with disabilities than those with fewer workers.
- » Family support and social environment – General health and wellbeing of the family as a unit can play a vital role in the success of the candidates during the vocational education including structure for daily routines and activities at home.
- » Work experience in hospitality industry also inculcates a sense of discipline and acceptance of the unusual work schedules required in this industry

Meeting with Shaun Leonard Executive Chef & Culinary Program Leader at BHMS Hotel Management School, Lucerne, Switzerland



ICSNE 2019: 21st International Conference on Special Needs Education - Zurich Switzerland – July 2019

A notable guiding principle emanating from this conference is that hiring of employees should be based on merit, suitability and capability of the candidate, regardless of the presence or degree of disability.

Extensive discussions with experts indicated that one of the biggest barriers to employment opportunities for people with disabilities in hospitality is perception of 'nature of work' including odd and long working hours and physical aspect of work and; or negative mindset of people involved. It was concluded that prior positive working experience with persons with disabilities contributed to favourable employer attitude.

Four 'patterns of successful practice' were identified among combinations of success factors. These patterns are inter-linked and mutually supportive and focuses on the perspectives and roles of key stakeholders within VET related to LSNs.

- » Management pattern: factors related to management of vocational organisations
- » Vocational education and training: include factors related to abilities and training of teachers, trainers and support staff to be able to work with LSNs
- » Learner's pattern: includes relevant factors related to special needs of learners
- » Labour market pattern includes relevant factors related to employers and workplace environments

The findings from this research can be used to inform hospitality employers and human resource professionals about best practices surrounding the initiation of a disability inclusion plan and set a foundation for future academic research.

The study suggests that the hospitality industry can make a significant social impact by challenging existing stereotypes toward people with disabilities and provide significant knowledge to start-up hospitality social entrepreneurs.

By pairing together, the facts that more working-aged individuals will be considered disabled in the coming years with the knowledge of a talent shortage in the hospitality industry, it is safe to assume that the percent of workers with a disability in service occupations will be increasing. This means people with disabilities are an important emerging source of labour. Disability inclusiveness will be a key strategy many companies will need to focus on when preparing for approaching workforce changes



Meeting International Experts in Special needs Education at the ICSNE Conference, Zurich

5. PERSONAL, PROFESSIONAL AND SECTORAL IMPACT

The Fellowship has impacted the Fellow significantly on a personal and professional level. It has opened doors to connect with practitioners and researchers, gain immeasurable new knowledge and the opportunity to share learning in Australia and internationally.

As a result of this Fellowship, the Fellow has learned about new pedagogies, developed more ideas and developed new teaching methodologies that he has been applying in the training of LSNs. This includes contextualisation of the learning material and the structure of training and delivery patterns thereby working holistically for these LSNs to pathway into employment. There are limited educators in this space who have expertise in the area of teaching and learning specially related to hospitality training for LSNs.

Several measures are being established to disseminate the findings from the Fellowship and implement learnings.

Internal presentations to the Learning & Curriculum Development team including trainers and assessors at MCIE and Holmesglen TAFE. The Fellow has approached Australian Culinary Federation, Les Toques Blanches Executive Chef Committee, Australian Institute of Technical Chefs and members of QuIET network (Quality in Education and Training Network) to make presentations to members and employers in the network.

In addition, the applied research and learnings has ignited ambitions within the Fellow to engage more with: LSNs who are willing to undertake education for purpose of employment in this sector, employers through the professional associations who may have already employed staff with special needs or are willing

to take on board this cohort of employees by providing them with operational strategical support. These training and employment approaches incorporate and account the major ideas that were learned during this period of functional research and the Fellow feels prepared to implement them.

Professionally, the Fellow feels a stronger desire to contribute to the on-the-ground and policy matters within the Victorian Department of Education and Training, as well as other departments focused on welfare and employment of Learners with special needs.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

Despite the differences between countries and cultures, and between VET frameworks, there are very significant similarities in the approaches to 'inclusiveness' of LSNs.

The most significant insight from the Fellowship for the Fellow is that there is a wide scope of possibilities and opportunities in hospitality for LSNs. It is about taking steps to reduce the stereotype that LSNs are less abled or less qualified or cannot work as hard as able-bodied employees, due to the nature of work in hospitality. Indeed, Employers already employing special needs staff, consistently rate them above average in performance, quality of work, productivity, attendance and work ethics.

Some of the highlights and considerations arising from the Fellowship are:

- » Supporting disadvantaged learners is successful when it is an institution-wide commitment.
- » Defined set of practices providing ongoing learning support and attaching more experienced staff with high-need learners thus reducing scope of ad-hoc methods, is essential.
- » Comprehensive Orientation programs to introduce nature and areas of work in a hospitality environment prior to commencing the vocational learning.
- » Competence assessment and job mapping prior to commencing any VET program is found as a very effective tool. This enables that most appropriate training programs are selected matching LSNs abilities and wishes.
- » Flexible ways to achieve VET qualifications - Don't rush the curriculum. Break

the qualification requirements into short skill sets and include hands-on practice at real workplaces.

- » Move beyond the walls of classroom - Upon completion of fundamental knowledge, emphasis on practical learning under supervision which may occur in a simulated environment. However, the evidences indicate that most successful learning outcomes are achieved at actual workplaces with participation in regular workplace operations.
- » Family support and social environment– Involvement of parents and families can be beneficial in raising levels of engagement and completion.
- » Motivation on the side of the training, the development of social competence and a supportive VET environment plays a key factor in success on facilitating the transition to the open workforce market.
- » Systematic and professional career guidance and counseling is vital.
- » Overcoming co-workers and employers' negative attitudes and perceptions is one major challenge when integrating into the workforce.

With these conclusions in mind, it is recommended:

- » Stronger relationship between VET providers, hospitality employers and service agencies in the community be built
- » The focus on LSNs to be strengthened and consideration to reforming the curriculum of VET institutes by providing more flexibility towards packaging of qualifications be introduced.

- » Additional training and education be required for teachers and practitioners in this field to help increase knowledge and gain essential skills, to train and facilitate learnings of LSNs including use of modern technological support aids available to support learnings for this cohort.
- » Facilitating career and employment opportunities for LSNs– job coaching, focused planning, prevocational and vocational training be offered to support transition to employment.
- » VET providers have educational measures in place that prevent or reduce dropouts by finding new educational alternatives for LSNs.
- » Question pre-existing stereotypes toward people with disabilities and provide significant opportunities to engage and uplift to startup hospitality social entrepreneurs.

The findings from this research can be used to inform employers, human resource professionals and hospitality VET providers, about best practices surrounding the initiation of a special need's inclusion plan and set a foundation for future academic research. Disability inclusiveness will be a key strategy that many companies could focus on when preparing for upcoming workforce changes in the hospitality sector.

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