

# Practical Partnership in the Nepali TVET System: Some Innovative Initiations

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## Abstract

Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) systems all over the world have realized that there should be joint efforts between government and business and industry to provide and finance training programme. The key then is finding an appropriate and practical balance between government, private and non-government provision for training people in the field of skills development. Working together with the employers and training institutes is the major rising concern in many developing countries like Nepal. Engaging the employers and training providers in (TVET) provision is essential and, like many other South Asian countries, Nepal's TVET policy 2012 emphasizes the private sector's role and partnership in skills development. In practice however, joint efforts in the Nepali TVET system have been weak and not extended much beyond the private sector. Thus, adequate partnership among public TEVT training institutions and business/industries should be developed for economic development of the country.

**Keywords:** *Technical Vocational Education and Training, Employer Engagement, Public Private Partnership, Industry Institute Linkage, Apprenticeships, Workplace Based Training, Training Delivery Models,*

## Introduction

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is an important tool to improve the employability of individuals, increase productivity in business and industry and reduce poverty. In most of the developing countries, the TVET system is hampered by poorly coordinated, outdated curricula as well as traditional delivery strategies (Mathew, n.d.). Similarly, instructors generally lack workplace based

practical experiences and relevant classroom equipment. TVET managers and instructors often fail to recognize their roles in promoting employment and employability. Training is supply driven (what the training institutions can offer) because there is a lack of data on the demand for the workers and the skills needed (by employers and the job market). Most of the TVET graduates enter the workplace with only a vague understanding

and incompetent skills of the requirements of the job. The TVET providers are under pressure to raise the standards to respond to the demands of the workplace in a world of constant change (Blank, 2010). The Nepali TVET system is not exceptional regarding these challenges and problems. It faces the joint challenges of unemployment and skills shortages in key sectors, partly due to a disconnect between skills supply and employer demand.

This realization resulted in the designing of more relevant and innovative approaches and systems in TVET. In order to respond to the demands of the workplace, various methods, approaches and techniques have been used in the past and also at present. One of the more successful results of these efforts is the birthing of new training models and approaches by working together more directly in the training programmes.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the situation of the collaborative approaches and practices of employers and training institutes in TVET analysis, design, development, and implementation in Nepali TVET system. While doing so, I also explore the issues and challenges of such partnership and highlight some innovative initiations, taking the case of Dakchyata: TVET Practical Partnership Programme in partnership approaches in Nepali TVET system.

The article is basically based on the review of current practices and desk review of partnership practices of some South Asian

countries practices on partnerships in the TVET sector. In addition, as a TVET practitioner, I have also reflected on my own practical experiences, challenges and lessons learnt throughout my professional career. More importantly, institutional experiences from my position as Deputy Team Leader and TVET Specialist of Dakchyata: TVET Practical Partnership Programme have been incorporated in writing this article.

### **Theoretical Perspectives of Partnership in TVET**

From a traditional point of view, the TVET system is the supplier of skills into the labour market and employers act only as consumers. In this one-way model, the TVET system is responsible for the entire skills development process and firms simply take the skills available to them. With the mismatch between supply and demand of skilled workers, demand-driven training that are customized to respond directly to specific requirements of the job role for an employer or a group of employers is practiced. However, given alarming rates of skills mismatch and youth unemployment (Livingstone, 2009; Pusterla, 2016), many countries are struggling to find ways of meeting employers' skills demands (Symonds et al 2011). In this process, employers are asked to participate in the curriculum design phase as formal or informal advisors on curriculum content. The curriculum they help design is then applied, and the idea is that the resulting graduates should have skills that better

match the needs of the labour market. Then the process automatically asks employers to participate throughout the cycle in the design, application, and updating of the VET curriculum. In this model, employers not only help designing the curriculum, but also help to teach it and ensure that it remains up to date. The commitment for employers is much larger, and their role shifts from passive consumers of skills to both producers and consumers of skills (Cunningham & Villaseñor, 2016; Billett & Smith, 2003). These practices brought new initiatives in the skills development sector in the name of employers' engagement and social partnership in vocational education and training. For a deeper understanding of these processes and mechanism, I would refer to the following sources:

European Training Foundation (2013): Social partnership in vocational education and training is about employers, trade unions, public authorities, and training institutions cooperating to ensure that the training provided is adequate and relevant to labour market needs.

Jane Kettle (2018): Employer engagement is defined as a range of activities, initiatives and approaches which are best conceptualised as a continuum. It includes responsive teaching and learning developments for upskilling and developing people already in work as well as fostering capability and attributes to enhance the employability of students in higher education (HE).

### **Practices of Partnership in TVET in some South Asian Countries**

Here I portray practices of partnership in some South Asian countries such as Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. These fact findings were summarised by reviewing available reports of the respective countries. The rationale behind selecting some South Asian countries is simply because of similar context of Nepal, economically and socially.

Bangladesh: In recent years, the Government of Bangladesh has initiated several measures to introduce private sector engagement in skills development. Many different actors from across the spectrum of public and private sector financing and management have been delivering education and skill-based training in Bangladesh (Reaching Out-of-School Children Program, and the Post Literacy and Continuing Education for Human Development 2018). Underprivileged Children's Educational Programs have developed strong linkages with industry. The Chittagong Skills Development Centre (CSDC) is the first industry-led non-profit skills training centre to grow the skilled labour pool by providing high-quality, cost-effective, value-added skills training to its corporate members and other private companies. Another example of private sector facilitated TVET is on ready-made garments programs established by the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Associations (Department for International Development. 2013). Public-private partnerships under Industry Skill

Councils work through the management boards of all public training centres. In addition, private training providers that meet national quality standards established by the Bangladesh Technical Education Board receive domestic budgetary funds.

In Pakistan, the National Vocational and Technical Training Commission is managed by the private sector and works with Sector Skills Councils. The Skill Development Sector Plan 2018 addresses adequate supply of quality training opportunities that are aligned with labour demand; providing low cost access to these opportunities and maximizing the return to these openings through complementary interventions that improve access to jobs and markets. Technical and Vocational Training Authority (TEVTA) and Pakistan Vocational Training Council (PVTC) engage directly with industry for broad areas of training needs and work with industry on curriculum (NAVTTTC 2015).

In India, Sector Skill Councils (SSCs), industry-led TVET institutions, and workplace-based training have been introduced. Till date, the National Skills Development Corporation (NSDC) has approved 38 Sector Skill Councils and Private Sector Support Units. SSCs consist of representation from industry, government and academia to ensure participation of all ecosystem stakeholders. NSDC provides governance, monitoring and performance improvement support. There are over 600 Corporate Representatives in the Governing Councils of these SSCs. NSDC works closely

with the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship and private sector. Private sector shareholders include 10 business chambers and industry associations with 51% private shareholding and 49% from public sector. It is envisioned to be private sector led, driven by market needs which support short term skilling by providing loans, equity, and grants. A legal provision has been made for Mediums of Industry Engagement. Industry can contribute through infrastructure and machinery, sponsoring and facilitating training, lending technical expertise, undertaking Recognition to Prior Learning (RPL) for employees etc. as part of corporate social responsibilities and industry partnerships (National Skill Development Corporation, India, 2018).

In Sri Lanka, there are joint ventures between the government and the private sector, including the Ceylon German Technical Training Institute, which focuses on technology related to the automobile industry and other technical trades and has strong links with industry (Skills Sector Development Programme – 2019). According to the Tertiary and Vocational Education Policy (2016), training needs analysis will be done based on labour market analysis through the establishment of a Labour Market Advisory and Coordinating Committee (LMACC) that includes ministries and national bodies, as well as the Employers Federation and Chambers of Commerce. TVET Policies for Employment and Entrepreneurship (2017) have formed private sector led Sector Skills Councils. Skills councils function as a

platform between the relevant industry and the training sector to ensure development of industry relevant skilled personnel in keeping with the labour market demand. In 2018, five councils were set up for construction, information and communication, tourism and hospitality, light engineering, and health care.

### **Partnership Practices in Nepali TVET System**

At the crossroad of professional careers as a TVET practitioner, I found several practices of partnership specially employer engagement in Nepali TVET system. Some of them are briefly explained below:

1. Most of the donor funded private training providers conduct local level training needs assessment before implementing the technical training programmes in order to verify whether the planned technical training programmes have needs of the demand in the local job market. Some do this in the name of Rapid Market Appraisal (RMA), or some do in the name of Training Needs Assessment (TNA) and others do this in the name of Key Informant Panel Discussion (KIP) at the local level. The main sources of information of the survey are employers.
2. The development of curricula is a core element to increase the relevance of TVET. Given that the private sector is the main recipient of TVET graduates, their contribution in this process is fundamental (Euler, 2017, p. 25).

In Nepal, the practices of involving employers in the process of developing curricula started long ago. CTEVT Curriculum Division invites employers and expert workers from the related industries to seek their technical inputs while developing occupational profiles (OP) and the curricula. Similarly, National Skills Testing Board/CTEVT also engages trade related experts from the related industries to solicit their technical inputs in the developing process of occupational skill standards. In the same way, the NSTB has formed a Sector Skills Committee to validate and endorse occupational skill standards (OSS) and occupational profiles.

3. Public and Community Technical Schools/institutes are practicing joint management committees which consist of representatives from private and public sectors. In the same way, some privately owned technical schools are also involving representatives from the public sector in their school management committee ([www.ctevt.org.np](http://www.ctevt.org.np)). Similarly, some of the CTEVT Technical Schools are also practising Enterprise Advisory and Partnership Committee (EAPC) where more employers and employer associations are members of the committee, in order to link the schools programmes to the local employers specially in the organization of On-the-Job Training (OJT) programme for the trainees of the schools.



4. Most of the CTEVT' technical education courses such as Pre-diploma (previously known as TSLC) and diploma (previously known as Technician Level) courses have On-the-Job Training provision in the factories, development organizations, and government offices. The provision has been made mandatory, which is clearly specified in the curriculum.
5. In 1995, Training Institute for Technical Instruction (TITI) developed the concept of Occupational Skills Upgrading (OSU) courses at industry workplace for the existing instructors of the Technical Schools under CTEVT in order to equip them with the actual industry' skills and knowledge. This practice has not been well continued at present.
6. Butwal Technical Institute (BTI) has been running the apprenticeship course in some of the industrial trades (Mechanical, Plumber and Electrician) since its establishment in 1962. In this training delivery approach, trainees are trained for more than 80% of the training period at the workplaces. The training delivery and assessment of the trainees are done jointly by training provider and the employers. This approach to training delivery has been replicated by some of the donor funded TVET implementers in the country.
7. Considering the importance of Public Private Partnership in skill development for enhancing national productivity and poverty reduction, Government of Nepal

and Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI) came up with an idea of establishing the "Elam Parshikshan Kendra (Trade Schools)" in the year 2003. This approach was a realization of the Government and Industry and business sector that mutual collaboration is essential between the two in order to make vocational training programs need responsive and relevant to the needs and requirements of the community and the individual. However, the Government and business communities were not able to continue the partnership agreement after 2009.

8. Some big business/industry houses have their own training cell and train their workers on workplaces. They train newly recruited employees as well as provide further training for existing workers. They arrange skill test and certification of the trainees from National Skills Testing Board/CTEVT.

### **Issues and Challenges of Partnership in the Nepali TVET System**

Despite the initiations and practices of partnership in the Nepali TVET system, there are several issues, problems and challenges that is facing the TVET system of the country. I have captured and elaborated some of them from my practical experiences as below:

1. During training need assessment to ascertain the actual need of the workers by the industries, the ambitious and

hypothetical figures are normally shared with the need assessors which are often somehow overblown and not in tune with reality regarding the real need of the skilled workers for the industries. This becomes the unrealistic data for the training providers and does not reflect the real time data which therefore cannot be used for training purposes.

2. There is a practice of engaging the representatives from employers and employer associations in the curriculum development process as subject matter experts. But when they come to provide inputs they often come as an individual and not as a real representative of the employers or employer associations. Thus, there is a lack of information sharing and institutional memory in their own organization. On the other hand, the inputs and voices of the engaged persons are only based on their personal and individual views and do not actually reflect the views of the corporate and industries as a whole. Serious problems are also observed by participants from the employees of the associations with pure administrative background not from the occupation related expertise. Therefore, there is a problem of ownership as well as actual institutional representation.
3. The employers also hesitate to provide On-the-Job Training, Apprenticeship Training and Traineeship for the trainees of the training institutes because of law and labour act provision. Big industries

are reluctant to accept the trainees of the technical training institutes for on-the-job training because of lack of the adequate technical expertise of the trainees and fear of wear and tear of their tools and equipment. Similarly, small and cottage industries do not have adequate necessary resources such as space, tools and equipment to accommodate the on-the-job trainees. These industries lack craftpersons (supervisors) to provide appropriate training to the trainees. Thus, the partnership between training institutes and employers in the training delivery become weak.

4. The provision to provide wages and salary to the trainees is also another challenge regarding on-the-job training and apprenticeship. The employers rarely cover such expenses and in worse cases, some employers expect adverse practices in engaging trainees in their workplace saying different reasons. The solution to this problem is not straightforward. Employers are generally willing to take on-the-job trainees and apprentices because they do not have to pay full wages of workers, who do not have the required skills, and they are eligible for monetary incentives.
5. When representatives of the employers or employer associations come to meetings, workshops and other interaction programme related to TVET development, they look for short term benefits rather than for sector related long-term benefits and contributions.

6. The provision of representation of the private sector in the public formal structures such as assembly, councils, and committees are only ceremonial and not mandatory, i.e. a legal requirement. Their number is very minimum, and the voices of the representatives would have no meaning in the decision-making process. Because of lack of legally mandatory provision in the representation in above structures, the employer associations sometimes send their employees who do not have any decision-making capacity and they are there merely for the sake of fulfilling the forum.
7. There are a number of national level business and industry associations in Nepal. Major national level associations have their own commodity associations within these structures. Besides these, there are also sector based associations such as Hotel Association of Nepal (HAN) and Federation of Contractors Association of Nepal (FCAN) etc. Despite their long existence in the country, limited contributions are seen in the real ground of working together in TVET development.

**Some Innovative Initiations of Practical Partnership in Nepali TVET system, taking the case of Dakchyata: TVET Practical Partnership**

Practical partnership in TVET being the missing link, has been one of the major cornerstones to address by the EU-funded TVET Practical Partnership Programme.

The overall objective of Dakchyata is to spearhead interventions in the TVET Sector of Nepal to find new and innovative ways to engage the private sector in further developments of TVET, thereby strengthening relevance and employability. This is sought achieved by enhancing active, practical, productive and meaningful engagement of employers and employer associations in the overall cycle of TVET system: analysis, design, development, implementation and evaluation phases.

Here, I have explained in brief some of the practices initiated by Dakchyata: TVET Practical Partnership programme in the areas of practical partnership in the TVET system of the country and sources of the information drawn on here are from the Dakchyata documentation system ([www.dakchyata-Nepal.org](http://www.dakchyata-Nepal.org)).

**Practical Partnership Between Private TEVT Providers and Employers in Training**

Dakchyata has developed different models where more and more employer’s engagement in training are sought through private TVET providers. In these models, employers are becoming increasingly involved in influencing and decision making in the design and development of the TVET programmes, while the training providers are giving space, for this shift to happen. These models have been developed and refined through extensive employer consultations and taking in the country context. At present,



ten private TVET providers have started to implement these models in construction, tourism, and agriculture sectors throughout the country utilizing practical partnership fund. Some of the models are explained briefly in the below where the role of employers increase in the various models.

In the developed model called the *Training Factory (TF)*, both theoretical and practical training will be provided inside the training institute premises and trainees are given opportunities to work in the actual work setting in the business set-up operated by the institute itself. The trainees will earn while learning when they work in the business outlet. There is on-the-job training and the relation to market relevance is obvious, but the employer's side plays no direct role in this model.

Under the *Semi-Apprenticeship and Employment Model*, employers and training institutes work together in training people. The training institute provides its staff as roving instructors to train the trainees and existing workers for upgrading at the work site of industry. In this model, there is a limited role of the training institute itself and a major role would be played by the employers. Even so, both the employer and the training institute play key roles.

A leading role of the employer is even more outspoken in what is called the *Informal Apprenticeship and Employment Model*. Here more than 90% of the practical

training will be imparted within a business or industry by learning by doing and only 10% theoretical sessions will be provided at training institutes. This model clearly underlines an employer led training approach and trainees will get wages when they work and learn in the industry.

*Field Based Agriculture and Forestry Training Model*—Under this model, preferably agriculture training provider collaborates with farmers' association and cooperatives for delivering training. Training in the farm with enterprising skills including financial and market linkage are critical features of this model. Additional training on entrepreneurial skills including financial and market linkage are provided. For this model to be successful, trainers work with farmers in the farm environment with only very limited institute-based training.

*Space Sharing Model* - The main objective of this model is to make use of the unused or underused training space with the training provider. This model helps to avail trained workforce for business and industry by ensuring optimal utilization of preferentially the public training facilities and increase the enrolment capacity of training system. The employers could take benefit of unused or underused training facility/infrastructure and conduct training under their own management. This approach mutually benefits training providers and enterprises in need of trained workforce (Pradhan et al. 2018).

## **Practical Partnership between Public TEVT Providers and Employers in Training**

Another approach developed by Dakchyata in order to engage employers in the training cycle is named as “Strengthening Employers Engagement in CTEVT Schools (SEECs)” (project document of Dakchyata’s SEECs-2019). This model is intended for the public TVET providers. The model has been developed after the in-depth studies of the CTEVT schools such as self-assessment, field studies, consultation with key CTEVT personnel at central level (Dakchyata. 2019: A report on the in-depth studies of the 9 CTEVT schools). The above in-depth studies revealed that CTEVT schools lack the meaningful role and mechanisms for engagement of employers in the training design and development, training delivery, schools’ management, and skills with the schools’ leaderships.

The approach is being carried out through the 9 identified Dakchyata Support Schools (DSS) across the agriculture, construction, and tourism sectors to strengthen their employer engagement activities (British Council. 2018, Bi-annual report of Dakchyata: TVET Practical Partnership). It has four key areas to strengthen the employer engagement in the schools, mentioned in the below ([www.dakchyata-Nepal.org](http://www.dakchyata-Nepal.org)):

*Industry Partnership in pre training phase:* CTEVT schools develop collaboration and partnership with employers to develop training programmes, learning materials,

facilities, and assessment to enhance the quality and relevance of the programmes. Different approaches such as rapid training needs analysis, employer’s consultation and local communities will be involved in this stage.

*Instructors’ up-to-date industry knowledge during training phase:* The model intends to enhance the quality of programme by developing pre- and in-service training that provide instructors’ up-to-date industry knowledge and by embedding industry experts’ inputs into training programme delivery. Occupational skills upgrading training at industry workplace will be organised for embedding of industry expertise in the delivery of the training programmes. A school bus will be provided to each school to facilitate mobility of students between school and workplace and networking with industry/employers.

*Promote employability of the trainees:* Through this model, CTEVT’s schools are promoting employability through equitable access, developing employment and self-employment skills, and providing careers advice and guidance.

*Leadership’s capacity for effective employer engagement:* The model is also building school leadership’s capacity for effective employer engagement through the embedding of employers into school governance structures and leadership development activities. The schools are engaging employers to obtain inputs for quality assurance and assessment, school

governance structures and development of leaderships skills in engaging the employers in the training programmes.

### **Employer Engagement in Labour Market Information System through National Level Employer Associations**

A number of employer associations and Dakchyata have just agreed on the creation of a model for employer associations to conduct harmonised, longitudinal and holistic demand side of labour market information in the country (British Council, 2018). The model has been developed on the premise and belief that employers are better able to assess the need of skilled workers than anyone else. The philosophy of the model is to engage employers and employer associations in an area of forecasting labour market skills needs in the respective sectors.

For this reason, Dakchyata has started working together with five national level employer associations (EAs): Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI), Confederation of Nepalese Industries (CNI), Federation of Nepalese Cottage and Small Industries (FNCSI), Federation of Contractors Association of Nepal (FCAN) and Hotel Association of Nepal (HAN) to assess the labour market information within three important economic sectors: Construction, Tourism and Agriculture sector through members and representatives of employer associations (British Council, 2020). The 5 EAs develop Occupational Classification of each identified occupation and collect,

update, maintain, and manage labour market information through their province and local level network organisations. These EAs also disseminate and link with the national level supply side management information system, thereby moving closer to establishing a national LMIS system that accommodate both demand-side and supply-side data.

At present, the implementing partners of Dakchyata are piloting and practicing the above models in their skills development programmes. Dakchyata is capturing and documenting their lessons learnt: what worked and what did not work. Lessons learnt from the above grant streams would be fed back to the policy guiding documents of public private partnership approaches of TVET system. These learnings would also be shared with other TVET stakeholders to allow them to learn from these pilots as well as to explore possibilities of scaling up and replication in other industrial sectors of the country.

### **Partnership in Developing Tools, Materials and Guidelines through Public Private Partnership Working Group**

One of the core public-private platforms developed through Dakchyata to bring together actors to work together for developing well-functioning, market relevant, high quality skill development programmes in the country, is the TVET Public Private Partnership Working Group (PPP WG), established in June 2018 and facilitated by Dakchyata, under the Chairmanship of Ministry of Education,

Science and Technology (MoEST). The group now has 15 full members: 50-50% parity between the public and private sector which includes representatives from four ministries involved in TVET, the National Planning Commission, and representatives from national level employer association including commodity associations from construction, tourism and agriculture. To date, a series of workshops, meetings and interactions have been conducted to develop the relevant “building blocks” of a Policy Guiding Document (PGD) of PPP approaches in TVET, which-once finalised -will be handed over to Government as the opinion of what the PPP Working Group members recommend, i.e. what public and private sector jointly agree on will bring the TVET sector of Nepal forward.

## Conclusions

I conclude that meaningful practical partnership is essential for all TVET programmes to be successful. TVET contributes to economic growth and increases employability to the trainees and improve productivity of the businesses and industries. This is possible when TVET program are designed and implemented through engaging the employers and as per the requirement of the employers. TVET programmes as suppliers and the employers as customers are so interrelated that the development of both must go forward hand-in-hand having practical partnership. During the initial period of the implementation of the grant streams, Dakchyata learned that the

relevancy of the training and employability of the graduates have been increased by working together with employers and training providers in meaningful partnership in the training programmes. Creating and functioning different forum and committees with representation from private sector and training institutes brought mutual understanding and sharing their real time needs for skilled workers. Similarly, working together between public and private sector in creating working group gave equal voices in the formulation of the policy level guidelines. Many more will be shared once all these grant streams reach in full implementation stages.

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