



Swiss-Indian Chamber of Commerce



Newsletter 4 / November 2010

Thank you for your interest in the Swiss Vocational Education and Training Initiative. The newsletter at hand contains an article on the international strategy of Switzerland in the field of education, research and innovation and two interviews with two VET project partners which give you some interesting insights on their experiences in India. Furthermore the first paragraph informs what the initiative is about in brief for all our new readers. And yet don't miss out on the success stories at the very end.

What the Swiss Vocational Education and Training Initiative is about

The Swiss-Indian Chamber of Commerce (SICC) and the Swiss Federal Office for Professional Education and Technology (OPET) jointly launched the Swiss-Indian VET project in 2008 in commemoration of the 60 years anniversary of the Swiss-Indian Treaty of Friendship. By introducing elements of the Swiss dual-track vocational education and training (VET) in selected locations in India, the initiative seeks to create mutual benefits for India and Switzerland. Swiss companies in India can meet their need for qualified workers and strengthen their competitiveness in India, while India profits from Swiss know-how relating to VET. Rather than competing against the Indian educational system, the initiative wants to be complementary and therefore builds on existing education and training systems and infrastructure whenever possible. The initiative is a private-public partnership and project costs are accordingly borne by both the private and public sector on a 40/60 percent allocation basis.

For more detailed information please refer to the recent newsletter on the following website: <http://www.sicc.ch/vet.htm>

Switzerland speeds up internationalisation of education, research and innovation

We are pleased that the international strategy of Switzerland in the field of education, research and innovation has been accomplished. On 30 June 2010 the Federal Council approved the strategy which was ordered early in 2009.

What is the strategy about?

It is about the realization of a vision:

“Switzerland establishes itself as demanded and preferred location in the field of education, research and innovation and uses its excellence in this domain for the integration in the worldwide area of education, research and innovation. Switzerland even is in the fore of the most innovative countries of the world.”

The Swiss economy is strongly internationalised. The Swiss educational and professional employment market is attractive for foreign scientists, lecturers as well as students. Current international comparisons of topics regarding education, research and innovation prove this

Executive Partners



SFIVET
SWISS FEDERAL INSTITUTE
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AND TRAINING





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Swiss Vocational
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too. The foreign demand for Swiss excellence in education, research and innovation exists without a doubt!

Why is this strategy required?

The growing knowledge-based society, increased competitive pressure by upcoming nations and differing demographic development in the industrial nations and emerging markets are only few examples. These global challenges require innovations and new qualifications for the employment market. The Latin and Anglo-Saxon educational systems as well as the Bologna process increasingly put pressure on nations with Germanic (dual) educational systems. They emphasize the importance of increased university graduates quota. On the other hand, Switzerland and Germany are prospering last but not least because of their sophisticated vocational education and training systems.

How do we move forward?

The course for the future has to be set today if Switzerland wants to remain one of the most innovative countries of the world.

A committed continuation of the proven and effective instruments is essential if Switzerland wants to integrate with the international field of education, research and innovation. In the light of the worldwide integration of these areas the retention of the Swiss excellence in education, research and innovation will be crucial. It will depend on how Switzerland continues to successfully participate in decisive programmes, networks and infrastructure alliances. Furthermore well educated employees with the right qualifications at all educational levels are a key success factor in a competitive economy. Swiss companies, research institutions and universities have to globally recruit students and skilled labour. In the global economy mobility of well educated employees is of vital importance.

The international strategy of Switzerland in the field of education, research and innovation addresses these challenges:

Priority 1: To strengthen and enhance the international networking

The actors in the field of education, research and innovation strengthen their position in the European and global education, research and innovation area. Their network expands.

Priority 2: To support educational export and talent import in order to strengthen the location Switzerland

Switzerland is one of the most attractive partner worldwide for cooperating in the field of education, research and innovation. The Swiss excellence is in demanded abroad on the one hand; on the other hand Switzerland attracts the best talents.

Priority 3: To promote international acceptance

The Swiss educational system is internationally known and its qualities are worldwide highly appreciated.

Interview with Alfred Rudin / Swissmem



Alfred Rudin, who - until September 2010- worked at the Department for Vocational Education and Training at Swissmem (the Swiss Association of Mechanical and Electrical Engineering Industries) has made a significant contribution to the development of the Swiss VET Initiative. The following interview provides key insights into his experiences.

You have made a big contribution to the VET pilot project in India from the very beginning. Tell us what excited you most when implementing the pilot project?

AR: What excited me the most was being able to successfully bridge cultural gaps. This helped us not only to get a good start but it was also critical for the further development of the VET program in India. To me the Swiss dual vocational and educational training holds cultural value. Initially, it was not easy to assess if we would be able to successfully introduce a VET system in India. However, after a short time, I realized that it would work well. The key was to keep the core of the Swiss VET program and make suitable adaptation for the Indian culture. We needed to get the balance right i.e. not too much or too little change.

In international projects, cultural aspects are very important to consider. How did you take these into account?

AR: I believe that it is key to convince people of an idea. This requires strong people skills, good communication and respect for others. Additionally, you must be completely professional. I work with my project partners and participants on equal footing.

In VET it's not only about providing training documents. It's about creating understanding and buy-in for the idea. We had to - for example - clear a hurdle regarding how you look at faults. It was great to see a change in behaviour when the apprentices view faults differently instead of solely obeying operational processes without taking the needs for improvement into account for example.

I am delighted that we were able to convince the project participants of the VET idea in such a short time. Someone once told me: "You live and breathe VET!"

What are your 3 critical success factors for implementing an international pilot project? Why do you think they are important?

AR:

First, establish a solid foundation, which requires hard work.

Second, have motivated project managers. In this case, both in India and in Switzerland.

Third, have commitment and endurance to take the project to the next phase.

In our case, as the above mentioned factors were in place, the apprentices were able to take their practical exams as early as August. This performance significantly impressed their trainers and ITI teachers and was rewarding for all of us.



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India.

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What can Swiss employers/employees learn from their Indian counterparts and vice versa?

AR: The Swiss generally find Indians curious and very eager for knowledge. For example, one of the ITI teachers I trained said, “Dear Mr Rudin, what we need the most is information” This clearly shows that Indians want to acquire new knowledge. Additionally I found the people working with patience and balance. In my opinion, Switzerland could do with more curiosity and patience.

On the other hand, I believe the Indians would benefit from thinking and taking actions more independently. This would help to increase the pace of their development. For example, young Swiss apprentices simply go ahead and have a shot at drilling while their Indian counterparts may approach their tasks over cautiously and perhaps even hesitantly.

The proof of the pudding is in the eating. If you don't make any mistakes you won't learn. Indians could learn from the Swiss how to better deal with mistakes and rethink their failure culture.

'It's the human encounters that make life worth living' (Guy de Maupassant). Would you like to share a special encounter with our readers?

AR: During my first training of ITI teachers in Pune, I met many teachers with 30-40 years of experience in training young professionals. At the end of that particular program a 62 year old teacher came up to me, hugged me and said: “Alfred, you have opened my eyes!” (Alfred Rudin smiles).

At the end of September 2010, you will leave Swissmem to take up a new professional challenge in another industry sector. What advice do you have for your successor?

AR: It is critical to maintain contact with people in order to selectively respond. This also applies to the Swiss VET pilot project. It is a role where you need strong leadership and excellent communication – it is not an administrative role, that's for sure.

I am convinced that you can only affect change if you take part in people's lives.

What are your learning experiences that will benefit you in your new job?

AR:

There are many experiences that I have learned from. Some of the key ones are as follows:

- to look closely
- to question
- to think about the impact and what you would really like to achieve
- and last but not least to reflect on the choice of working method.

Our job in the field of VET impacts the lives of many young professionals. It is therefore essential that we take this responsibility seriously and take actions that positively affect these young people.

Is there anything else you wish to add?

AR: When I speak about the VET pilot project to Swiss people, a very common question is why Switzerland would help Indians in their development of young professionals. After all India will be/is our competitor. I have also heard the same question from many Indians; I used to reply as follows: "If in the coming years you had to buy a car, which one would you select? Many replied they would choose a European brand (increasing trade between Europe and India). Then I replied: “That's the reason why we are here!”

Switzerland will only prosper and succeed if we are not afraid. If we are afraid we are likely to lose. India is a challenge and we need to accept this. It is only by cooperating with other countries that we will succeed. I wish Switzerland becomes more visionary and less fearful.

Thank you very much for your personal insights and your valuable contribution to the project. Wishing you all the best for your professional career as well as for you personally, Alfred Rudin.

Interview with Hanspeter Tanner / SFIVET



Hanspeter Tanner, Training Consultant at SFIVET (the Swiss Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training) has already travelled for the fourth time to India where he has trained teachers from ITI (Industrial Training Institute) and professional instructors within the Swiss VET Initiative. In the following interview you learn about the VET training and its challenges and about some personal experiences Hanspeter has made.

In August 2010 you travelled to India for the fourth time. What impresses / fascinates you again and again?

HT: India is a country, well actually a world of its own. It is a complex and multilayered country which I believe we will never completely fathom. There are so many impressions in various shades, colours and aspects you collect in India.

One day of the 9 resp. 7 day-training course for teachers resp. instructors is about 'situation-oriented training and teaching'. Could you please explain it to our readers? Why is this course item so highly important?

HT: It's about the newest expertise in learning theory: How do you gain knowledge? How do you act towards new behaviours?

Human beings approach new problems/challenges on the basis of previous experiences. This proven fact has made new demands on training and education.

We all remember the situation when we tell a child that he/she shouldn't touch a hot plate. A child learns much better if he/she actually touches the hot plate and burns his/her fingers. The same process occurs in the field of education: By experiencing you will learn better.

The syllabus is built up in such a way that the situation is placed in the centre and around this situation knowledge is imparted. The traditional education in India however is imparted by the teacher; only few different methods are used.

In the VET project, we decided to train on the basis of modern learning theories. This includes that we ask for self dependent action. It takes time though to implement this paradigm shift but it's the future-oriented way we need to go.



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What are the 3 critical success factors teachers and instructors have to implement so that the Swiss VET Initiative will be sustainably successful?

HT:

First, the willingness to engage with new things and to acquire new behaviour.

Second, continuous further / advanced training.

Third, the willingness to take a new role within the training process (from boss to coach)

What can Swiss professional teachers learn from their Indian counterparts and vice versa?

HT: I hold the Indian professional schools (ITI) in high esteem; you encounter comprehensive theoretical knowledge there. For the further development of the Indian education I believe the state should encourage the schools to behave more in an innovative way. New and creative learning methods ought to be broadly implemented.

For Swiss professional teachers I think they would benefit from teaching with less resources but providing equal teaching quality nevertheless.

In your report about the training held in August you record that appropriate incentive would add to sustainability? What's your point?

HT: Well, this subject needs to be discussed in detail. The point is, that it shouldn't be a burden for instructors to train apprentices within the VET project. They ought to have sufficient time and to get support from management for accomplishing their additional task. In regard to the teachers I feel that they should get paid for their efforts. After all they are not only doing their job as ITI teacher but also educating apprentices within the Swiss VET initiative.

Which learning experiences from India do you transfer into your job in Switzerland and for which reason?

HT: In Switzerland I conduct courses in didactics for teachers at the beginning of their career. In India I trained people with no specific background in that field which forced me to simplify the lesson contents. Breaking down the content into smaller items is extremely important in education. This learning experience showed me that quite plainly and made me adapt my course in didactics back home.

Back in Switzerland, which special experience did you tell to your friends and family? One of which was either humorous, touching or intense?

HT: I would like to share the story of Afsar whom I met in an Indian national park after having completed my training sessions. Afsar works as a guide in this park. We talked a lot together and realized that we both shared a passion for photography. For 3 days he even lent his object lens to me. When I wanted to give it back to him he told me that he wanted to sell his lens; unfortunately I wasn't carrying any cash on me. He replied: "That's not at all a problem, you may transfer the money to my bank account when you're back in Switzerland," and gave me the object lens.

Is there anything else you wish to add?

HT: The Swiss VET Initiative is a huge stroke of luck to me personally. I extremely appreciate working with all parties involved in the VET project and I am grateful to bring in my knowledge and experience on the one hand and to personally profit from it on the other hand.

Thank you very much for the interview and your openness and for sharing some personal experiences with us. Wishing you many more learning experiences to come, Hanspeter Tanner.

Success Stories

Success story no. 1:

We are proud to inform that all apprentices just recently passed the assessment of the 1st semester. Congratulations! The assessment of the 2nd semester is planned to take place in January 2011. The Swiss Assessment methodology was followed both for theory and practical. The certified assessors from India and Switzerland jointly conducted this assessment.

Success story no. 2:

ITI Teachers and Company Instructors have gone through assessment training and certification by the Swiss experts. Now India has a pool of certified Swiss VET training assessors.

Contact

If you have any comments or feedback regarding the VET initiative, please let us know! Thank you.

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