Industry-based Training models in Kiribati

The current state and potential for application

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Introduction

This brief is a summary of the national findings for Kiribati from the *Construction Sector Industry-based Training in the Pacific* research commissioned by the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and carried out by the Skills Consulting Group. The focus of the research was on the current state of industry training in 6 Pacific Island Countries (PICs) and its likely impact on the implementation of industry training in the Pacific construction sector.

The findings for Kiribati are summarised in four areas:

- The models of industry training currently being delivered in Kiribati and its construction sector.
- The level and scope of skills demand in Kiribati which drives the need for Industry Training.
- The barriers to implementation of industry training in Kiribati.
- The development needs for Kiribati to enable successful industry training models.

The research was carried out between May and August 2021 using a combination of desk-based and field research. Field research involved semi-structured interviews with stakeholders of industry training in the selected PICs. These included government representatives; education and training providers; employers and industry representatives; and community and voluntary organisations where appropriate.

Industry Training in Kiribati and its Construction Sector

Only one tertiary provider in Kiribati is focused on construction skills development: the Kiribati Institute of Technology (KIT), a government owned TVET provider that is a division of the Kiribati Ministry of Employment and Human Resource Development (MEHRD). KIT is in partnership with another government owned TVET provider in Kiribati, the Marine Training Centre Tarawa. There are two other tertiary education providers in Kiribati: the Kiribati Teachers College (KTC) and the University of the South Pacific (USP), Tarawa campus (Australian Government DFAT, 2015).

INDUSTRY TRAINING

A mode of learning where learners develop competence mostly through the workplace, however, develop some complementary knowledge sets, skills, or competence outside of the workplace.

KIT offers both short courses and full qualifications and offers these within a flexible learning framework. Construction courses at KIT include construction, electrotechnology, and plumbing, as well as non-accredited short courses in basic trades skills to meet industry needs.

KIT has some core programmes that approximate industry training systems; however, they are missing some key elements. The courses run on a model where competency-based off-job training is delivered at KIT for durations of approximately two years. Learners are then placed within workplaces for a period of approximately one year (Kiribati Institute of Technology, 2021). It should

be noted that in Kiribati these placements are termed ‘apprenticeships’, however, they are more in line with what would more widely be termed ‘student attachments’ or ‘internships’. The Apprenticeship Board, managed by MEHRD, regulates these placements, and provides funding for them in the form of scholarships. Workplaces with attached students receive simple checklists to evaluate learner performance, but they are not coordinated with off-job learning provision. Workplaces that accept learners are not well-informed of individual learning needs, workplace learning activities are not always relevant to the learner’s course outcomes, and off-job and on-job learning outcomes are not designed in an integrated way that synergise with each other.

KIT has a Course advisory committee to collect industry input in the development of programmes, however, evaluations of its effectiveness are mixed. A key issue was that the level of training available from KIT was too low for industry needs. Some employers stated that they need to implement supplementary non-formal training and inductions for attached students from KIT as their skills requirements are more specific than those taught at KIT. This indicates that industry input in the design of programmes is not being implemented sufficiently.

KIT is accredited by the Educational Quality and Assessment Programme of The Pacific Community (SPC). It has special agreements in place for accreditation in Australia and New Zealand through recognition of prior learning (RPL) processes performed by registered training organisations in Australia (Kiribati Institute of Technology, 2021). These occur multiple times per year when authorised assessors are brought in from Australia.

KIT is funded through central government and donor funding, notably Australian Aid. Core to the success of WBL in Kiribati is the long-term donor funding and programmes that have built capacity in the sector. The *TVET Sector Strengthening Programme* (TVETSSP) and the *Skills for Employment Program* (SfEP) have invested heavily into creating skills development infrastructure and capacity within Kiribati.

Construction Skills Landscape

In Kiribati, there was a mixed level of demand for construction skills. We cannot make a clear assessment of the demand for skilled construction workers in Kiribati, but stakeholders consistently described the need for a deeper skills pool in the industry.

More information is needed regarding the demand for skills in Kiribati, particularly the demand for semi-skilled workers. Quantitative assessments of demand will be needed. Undersupplied and oversupplied skills identified by participants are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Identified undersupplied and oversupplied construction skills in Kiribati.

SKILLS UNDERSUPPLIED	SKILLS OVERSUPPLIED
• Most construction sectors report skills gaps. • Higher trade skills in areas such as plumbing and electrical. • Structural engineers and those able to assess the quality of construction. • Architects.	• Stakeholders made references to the oversupply of ‘white-collar’ graduates in Kiribati with too few ‘blue-collar’ and trades graduates. • Lower-skilled carpenters.

- Higher level, Certificate level 3, holders in construction.
- Foundation skills such as technical drawing and interpretation.

Barriers to the Successful Implementation of Industry Training Models in Kiribati

The main barriers to establishing successful industry training in Kiribati are the sustainability of provision, limited capacity, and limited engagement with industry.

Sustainability of Provision

Kiribati has an effective TVET provider – KIT. The provider is funded partially by government but is also maintained through strong donor support. Though its institutional provision produces quality outcomes, this donor dependency presents a risk to the sustainability of the system. Funding from the government was also noted to be inefficient, with procurement processes that were limiting due to long wait times and ineffective price ceilings.

Sustainability of provision is similarly a challenge in the limited capacity of employers. Opportunities for specialised skill placements in Kiribati, as well as standard trade skills, are limited. Kiribati's size means that it does not have the capacity for many private construction activities.

Limited Capacity

The key barrier to the development of an industry training system is that industry does not have the resources and skills required to fully support attached learners. This includes often not having the right equipment and/or PPE train with, or the skilled trainers available to train learners. This is also complicated by cultural barriers to knowledge sharing - Kiribati has a conservative approach to knowledge sharing. Knowledge and skills are not widely shared as they are viewed as the property of the individual's family, only to be shared and transferred fully to a rightful heir. This is a key challenge for industry training as effective learning requires access to learning resources and to trainers.

Participants also stated in the research that KIT does not have the capacity to deal with growing enrolment numbers. This compounds the already limited availability of training materials within the institution.

Limited Engagement with Industry

KIT has a course advisory committee to approve the design of programmes, but employers noted that their perspectives were not being incorporated into programmes. KIT provides its students workplace learning opportunities, but these are not integrated in a work-based Learning programme. In addition, KIT is not providing information to employers on students' training and support needs. This has led to some employers giving irrelevant workplace exposure to learners, or simply treating them as cheap labour. Employers are given checklists to evaluate the learner's quality of work for monitoring purposes, but placements are not organised to enable learners to develop occupational competence or for industry to sign-off on learner skills.

Local and traditional knowledge and skills will need to be considered when designing and establishing industry training in Kiribati. Not only the cultural norms around knowledge sharing, but

the potential for traditional construction skills and methods to add to the construction programmes and make these more locally relevant.

Other barriers included variable construction standards, low online and distance learning capabilities of staff, and the inability for KIT to secure accreditation for and permission deliver higher level courses.

The Development Needs for Industry Training Models in Kiribati

Based upon the availability of resources; the status and capacity of Industry Training; and the current approach to skills formation, Kiribati was classified in the research as a 'Provider-led Training System'. These types of systems were found to be dominated by institutional training models rather than industry training models; workplace learning takes place, but industry do not lead the design of skills frameworks or the delivery of training. These systems lack the effective systems and capabilities for managing some features of industry training.

Kiribati has more than a single WBL provider, however, KIT is the only provider of construction training; the others are focused on Maritime and Teacher Training. Programmes at KIT frequently involve workplace attachments however their structure is not outcomes based. Mechanisms also exist within KIT to receive industry inputs for design of their programmes, but these perspectives are often not considered. KIT's engagement with industry does not promote industry-led course specification or design.

The development priorities for these types of training systems are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Development Priorities for Provider-Led Training Systems.

DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES FOR 'PROVIDER-LED TRAINING SYSTEMS'
Policy and Coordination
1. These PICs understand dual training systems but need support in implementing and capacitating on-job learning and assessment.
Regulation
2. Capability building for regulatory bodies around dual learning systems and concepts. 3. Implementation/ capacitation of effective monitoring and evaluation systems and capabilities.
Workforce Development
4. Develop simple labour market information nationally and regionally. 5. Engage employers more effectively in framework and qualification design. 6. Draw on regional qualification and assessment networks to support and expand local provision.
Financing
7. Support local families, groups and communities through targeted scholarships and grants. 8. Implement investment planning funding systems for providers.
Delivery
9. Link into regional dual training frameworks and systems.

10. Potential to bring external providers in to deliver online and blended learning elements.

KIT will likely have a significant role in any future industry training system in Kiribati as it is the most diverse provider of formal work-based education in Kiribati. The institution was reported to be an effective off-job provider of learning; however, it is possible that capacity and capability building in on-job learning may be needed to transition their delivery to support industry training models. Assessments of KIT capacity and capability will be important to determine how the institution might support industry training activities.

There is potential for KIT to extend its current role into wider support for industry training activities as it has influence over the sector. As a mode of learning, industry training has an emphasis on learning in the workplace rather than in an institution. Institutional learning still takes place, but this is to support the learning that happens in the workplace rather than the other way around. If industry training models were to be adopted, it is likely that courses at KIT would be reduced in scope, opening capacity for KIT to take on wider roles in the industry training system. This could range from coordination functions such as arranging formal training activities; assisting the development of attachments between learners and employment; to pastoral care for learners embedded in workplaces. These intermediary functions help to reduce the burdens of administration and system navigation for employers and learners and could therefore enable sustainability of provision. The benefits of any potential intermediary functions would need to be assessed in local context.

National capacity and capability assessments will also be needed to determine what industry training functions are able to be performed locally and what functions may need external support. The capacity of industry and KIT are limited; therefore, it is likely that external support will be needed in the medium term to maintain and grow KIT provision as well as empower employers to accept learners and meaningfully train them. Currently, KIT depends on donor funding to sustain its provision. Further support or integration may be possible with the Australian industry training system and further integration with regional systems, such as the current quality assurance of KIT through SPC, may provide opportunities.

Crucially, industry capacity will need to be addressed. Industry training is highly dependent on the availability and quality of workplace learning opportunities. National workforce opportunities and needs should be assessed to quantify this and determine the impacts of current capacity.

It is likely that labour and skill demands will be different throughout the different areas of Kiribati and these should be considered when designing training. As Kiribati is geographically distributed over a large area, sharing resources and capability may also be difficult. The design of programmes, their implementation, their regulation, and learning opportunities for these programmes may also be impacted. Effective capacity and needs analyses between the different areas will be important for national level implementation or reforms.

For the design of programmes, consideration will need to be given to cultural attitudes to knowledge sharing. The traditional approach to passing on knowledge through family will have an impact on the knowledge sharing components of programme design. The value of traditional design, techniques, and construction materials, would reduce reliance on external materials, increasing sustainability of provision. Indigenous rights will need to be considered when determining whether these methods are suited to potential industry training programmes.

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