

press release / english

*The past and the future of Vocational Education and Training in India:
A report about the Skill-conference in India on the 24th and 25th of
October in the German House in Delhi*

The Center for Modern Indian Studies (CMIS) and the German Research Center for Comparative Vocational Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T.) under the direction of Prof. Dr. Matthias Pilz from the University of Cologne (UoC) were hosting a conference about vocational education and skill formation on the 24th and 25th of October in Delhi. The hosts were more than happy to welcome numerous highly-respected researchers from several Indian and German research facilities like Prof. Dr. Santosh Mehrotra (Jawaharlal Nehru University), Dr. Uma Gengaiah (Indira Gandhi National Open University), Prof. S. Nayana Tara (Indian Institute of Management Bangalore), Prof. Mona Khare (National University of Educational Planning and Administration), Dr. Usha Ajithkumar Malayankandy (Socio_economic Research Institute), Prof. Dr. Ganapathy Palanithurai (Gandhigram Rural Institute, Deemed University), Dr. Santosh Prusty (Indian Institute of Management Shillong), Prof. Dr. Regan Venkatram (Tamil Nadu Agricultural University), Prof. J.S. Sodhi (International Management Institute) and many others. The topic of the conference was the past and the future of research in the field of Vocational Education and Training. The researchers presented their various projects about Vocational Education and Skill Development. Those projects were arranged with the help of the CMIS and the German funding agency DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service). The projects had a wide range within the field of Vocational education like e.g. the quality of ITIs, informal learning in the informal sector as well as the demand-driven approaches in Skill Development. Due to the fact that the funding of the CMIS and the DAAD will expire in the end of 2017, the participants thought about the future of research in India in the second part of the conference. Not only funding was discussed during the workshops but also the direction and feasible topics for research in future. Subsequently the researchers signed the so called Declaration of Delhi. The Declaration can be seen as the cornerstone for the future of research between Indian and German scientists in Vocational Education. It will strengthen the research infrastructure in India and will help to develop new fields of research with the focus on sustainable Skill Development of workers in India. The conference was a fruitful closure of the CMIS. Not only because of the Declaration of Delhi the participants felt positive and optimistic about the future of research of Vocational Education and Skill Development in India.



Declaration on research between India and Germany in the field of skills development and vocational education and training

New Delhi, October 2017

Current situation:

Over the past eight years, the signatory researchers have acquired wide-ranging experience of joint research projects, sharing expertise and learning from each other. They have successfully conducted a wide range of research projects and disseminated the findings to the interested public. The German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) 'New Passage to India' funding stream set up by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) have been essential to this fruitful activity.

In this context, India's substantial need for academic expertise in the area of skills development and vocational education and training (VET) has become evident. VET is increasingly crucial to the country's social and economic development.

We therefore believe research is needed in all areas of VET in India, including pre-vocational education in schools, formal vocational education and training, college and polytechnic courses, and non-formal and informal learning. Such research should also focus on studying the experience of other countries like Germany, to understand the best practices and evaluate which of those practices can help Indian VET system to progress faster and create visible impact.

This anchors the relevance of academic research into VET firmly in an international context. For example, the importance of VET and academic cooperation was reflected in the UNESCO Kuala Lumpur Declaration of 2015 (Asia-Pacific Conference on Education and Training: Quality Education and Skills Development for Sustainable Future).

We are therefore outlining our vision and what will be needed to achieve it and addressing relevant stakeholders in politics, the private sector and society.

Vision:

The signatory scholars' vision for the future of VET research is to:

- Strengthen the development of a research infrastructure in India, predominantly at university level, that meets the highest international quality standards.
- Step up recruitment of future generations of researchers into vocational education and training in India. We envisage a joint Indian-German training scheme for PhD students forming the basis for this strategy.
- Seek stronger cooperation between India and Germany at university level (including academic institutes) with a view to initiating and conducting joint research projects. The networks built will help to ensure quality and sustainability, with a focus on mutual learning by both countries.
- Develop possible research priorities in a number of areas, including curriculum development, implementation research, research into teaching and learning, teaching development, workplace learning, media and technology, school development and quality, school management, school-to-work transition, social policy, training economics, etc.
- Build networks in India with relevant stakeholders in the field of skills formation and VET, including the formal and informal economy, schools, state and private educational institutions, NGOs, and administrative and ministerial bodies.

What needs to be done:

Certain conditions and enablers need to be put in place to translate this vision into reality:

- Existing cooperation arrangements between Indian and German researchers need to be deepened and widened. We need to approach interested researchers in both countries with a proven track record and invite them to collaborate.
- It is impossible to plan research activities without appropriate budgets, so the provision of funding by the relevant state bodies on both sides is essential. The German-funded project 'New Passage to India' has been very successful and may therefore serve as a role model, but the model requires a stronger research component.
- Efforts are needed to smoothen the formal and administrative processes. This applies, inter alia, to the administrative management of research programmes, the provision of official authorisations required, etc.
- The political side in both countries seeks a shift in focus. The focus so far has been on support for promoting technology; in future, this will shift to a combination of research into technology and research into VET to implement technology effectively. For implementing technical innovation at operational level successfully and sustainably, India must have a very well trained workforce at an intermediate skills level.
- Activities will be closely linked to the cooperation activities of the Indo-German Joint Working Group on Skill Development and Vocational Education and Training.

Expected results:

If these aspects can be addressed, the signatories agree that significant added value can be created both for India and for Germany:

- A new high-quality research network will emerge and have long-term influence.
- Research by both Germany and India into VET will acquire international visibility and enjoy an enhanced reputation. The developments outlined above may also serve as a role model for other countries.
- The provision of wide-ranging and academically robust data and findings on VET and skill development in India will be broadened substantially and will underpin decision-making by training policy-makers. Indian, German and international companies will also have access to a set of essential information about employees' skills.
- Prior assessment and post-hoc evaluation of VET activities can be achieved through academically robust support programmes, enhancing the spirit and purpose of state-level innovations in vocational training.
- The quality of VET in India will be improved to better tackle the skills gap, which is the only way to solve India's economic and social challenges in the long term.
- Finally, research cooperation will also help to deepen cultural exchange and understanding between India and Germany.