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RESEARCH - PLANNING - EVALUATION

Case study No.4 of TAFE meeting industry needs and government goals

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Public, Technical and Further Education Providers
Unleashing Our Capability

CASE STUDY 4:

The training is tailored to the needs of industry

**TAFE
RESPONSIVENESS**

**INDUSTRY
NEEDS**

COAG GOALS

**TAFE ASSISTS INDUSTRY TO DEVELOP
WORKERS WITH SKILLS FOR THE NEW
ECONOMY**

Institute:

Kangan Institute

Industry client:

**Council of Textile & Fashion Industries
of Australia (TFIA)**

Summary:

The TFIA Textile and Fashion Hub assists people to develop skills needed for the new economy, such as using digital technology for design, addressing a COAG aim of developing skills to meet the changing needs of the economy.

ALIGNMENT WITH COAG

This case study aligns with the National Agreement for Skills and Workforce Development which commits the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) to a vocational education and training (VET) system that ensures the “skill levels of the working age population are increased to meet the changing needs of the economy”.

The case study also provides an exemplar of innovative training that will help to “shape the new economy” (PM Julia Gillard, 13 April 2012).

BACKGROUND

The Textile and Fashion Hub is a collaborative initiative between the Textile Fashion Industries of Australia (TFIA) and Kangan Institute (KI) and the Federal Government’s AusIndustry. As an innovative industry centre of excellence, it services industry in ways that are not possible in conventional industry training facilities. It focuses on high-end niche training on advanced technologies for the textile, clothing and footwear (TCF) sector, particularly for employers and employees in small to medium enterprises (SMEs).

At the Hub, Kangan Institute provides training to the sector while industry people undertake research and development (R&D), develop sample runs of products, and access technology to prototype their design, prior to taking it to market. These resources are particularly beneficial for SMEs who do not have the capability or finances to conduct R&D.

SKILLING FOR THE NEW ECONOMY

This case study is guided by the definition of the new economy in the publication 'Skills for All Australians' (2012). It describes a new economy in which Australian businesses will need:

... the capacity to embrace technological and business process innovations to provide competitive advantage in a global market place. They will need to have ready access to knowledge and world class capabilities that support rapid adaption to changing market needs, tapping into innovative practices and building sustainable and profitable partnerships both domestically and globally. (p.29)

The case study focuses on the need for skills in the new economy in the use of information and communication technology (ICT) and related business processes; for instance, the use of digital technology for business purposes ranging from research and design, to product development, supply chain management, production and marketing.

In the case of the textile and clothing businesses involved in the Hub, the new economy commonly involves designing items in Australia and then transmitting the design overseas for manufacturing. In response to these new business practices, the Hub's partners are committed to providing users with access to digital resources, including support for potential National Broadband Network (NBN) projects, particularly to assist the design process within the digital supply chain.

TAFE INTERVIEWEE: RAY GRIFFITHS, CEO, KANGAN INSTITUTE

What do you understand by the term 'skills for the new economy'?

We're actually asking the people who use the Hub what skills they need in order to operate in the contemporary environment, the new economy. And they're telling us what skills they need in order to compete as micro businesses and SMEs. And we, almost 'back of house', are drawing down what is available in the training packages to try and meet that need, and supplementing it with whatever else we can do, particularly with industry expertise, from our industry partner.

From our perspective, the meaning of the new economy relies entirely on the views of those entrepreneurs and business people at the Hub. And it's almost like a new economy for us as well, because we're trying to unlearn our role as a purveyor of qualifications and training packages, and re-learn how to actually fully tailor a bespoke training service for those groups. So it's kind of new economy for us as well as for them.

What are some specific skills you are helping people develop?

Some of the important skills are learning to deal with the global supply chain. For a designer, being part of the global supply chain is important: it really does add a lot of advantage for them.

In the Hub, the Institute operates like a professional services firm offering workforce development, skills development, access to the intellectual property around teaching, and learning and assessment for these businesses, but entirely based on what they identify as their needs.

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Brett McLeod, Kangan Institute's General Manager, Business Services Group, explains what the Institute provides to the Hub:

The Hub provides more than just training: it's a place where industry people can come and trial their design in a supported way, if they haven't got the capability or access to the technology. We can support them to use the new technology so they can then take their product to market sooner.

We can't compete with China in production numbers, but what we can do is be quick to market. We believe that through innovation and design the industry will compete globally, going forward. So they are skills that they need and the Hub is really designed around helping them get their design completed. We'll support them and link their experience to training as well.

Skills for the new economy are the focus of a range of training programs provided at the Hub, such as the program 'Adobe CS5 for fashion and textiles' which enables the participant to 'create a custom placement print and get it printed on the GT451 digital garment printer'.

To facilitate skilling for the new economy, training at the Hub incorporates the use of new technology, including digital knitting machines and digital printers, body scanners, cutters and plotters, and computer-aided design (CAD) technology. To develop skills in using this technology, participants access extensive services, ranging from technical support to mentoring, professional workshops and master classes.

BENEFITS FOR INDUSTRY

The benefits of the Hub to people in industry are tangible: it provides them with a venue where they can develop skills, carry out research and development, and progress their innovations in a supported way. It also provides an environment where industry groups and individuals can meet, innovate, collaborate, learn and develop, to ensure they can thrive in an industry that requires new ways of working if Australian companies are to be competitive in a global market.

Groups using the Hub include the Industry Association Consortium (IAC), the Fashion and Textile Provider Network (FTPN) and the Sustainable Enterprise Network (SEN). Ten industry clusters also meet regularly at the Hub and Kangan Institute staff interact with all of these groups, to identify skill needs and provide training across the sector.

DRIVERS BEHIND THE HUB

The Hub concept originated in 2009, in discussions between management of the Textile & Fashion Institute of Australia (TFIA) and Kangan Institute about formal, flexible workplace training models for the TCF industry. This led to deliberations about ideal training models for SMEs, which make up 86% of the industry, and how to adequately meet their needs.

TFIA members were concerned about the difficulties in meeting market demands, and the lack of access to technology and skill development. Kangan Institute had previous experience with flexible delivery models for industry, particularly at its Automotive Centre of Excellence and the Aviation Training Centre. Drawing on its experience and in collaboration with the TFIA, Kangan Institute developed a model for the TCF industry that resulted in the creation of the Textile and Fashion Hub.

MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

The Hub is overseen by a formal steering committee consisting of members from both the TFIA and the Institute. The steering committee developed a collaborative working model which shows that the TFIA are responsible for business development of the Hub and Kangan Institute manages all the operational aspects of the Hub.

Ten industry clusters are supported by the Hub: Computer Aided Drafting, Design, Digital Printing, Export, Footwear, Knit, Mentoring, Performance Wear, Standards and Sustainability. Each of the ten clusters is assisted by industry experts who report through a cluster leader to the Hub steering committee, with recommendations from action research data on what products and services they require to improve their businesses, meet the demanding pressures in the sector and ensure they can thrive in the future.

INNOVATIVE DELIVERY

The training philosophy of the Hub is to pilot emerging learning technologies available via the web at a low cost, and to combine these with proven technologies. The goal is to extend training opportunities to SMEs who may otherwise not have access to this level of training due to their location, time restrictions or lack of funds.



TABLE 1. INNOVATIVE TRAINING APPROACHES BY KANGAN INSTITUTE FOR THE TEXTILE AND FASHION HUB

EXAMPLE OF QUALIFICATION

Innovative skilling programs customised to industry requirements are available, with the skill sets mapped against national Fashion and Textile qualifications.

An example of these is the development of the Knitting Machine and Digital Printer training, which was divided into small chunks of skills sets to enable SMEs to participate with minimal time impact on their business.

As part of the development of these programs, Institute staff mapped each skills set to a competency from the national Advanced Diploma of Textile Design and Development (LMT60407) qualification, which gives the participant a package of competencies leading to a national qualification.

DELIVERY METHODOLOGY

All training at the Hub fits within a blended learning model. This allows Kangan Institute to capitalise on digital technologies such as cloud computing, freeware and social media. For example, the training blends together content from YouTube, Slideshare and Flickr, and trainers communicate with students via Skype combined with face-to-face workshops.

Live workshops are streamed using video-streaming technology and any video content captured is easily edited and embedded into future workshops. All such material is available online via the Learning Management System Moodle, for Hub clients to access. Moodle is integrated with Equella, a content repository, ensuring version control and standardised training material is available to facilitators anywhere in the world.

The Textile and Fashion Hub has invested in a number of 75"-82" electronic HD touch screen e.boards. These e.boards mimic touch screen technology that most users are already familiar with in their daily lives, and bring the world-wide web technologies into the Hub, engaging the participants visually and through Skype and other video conferencing tools and allowing impressive multi-way collaboration.

Some products developed by the Institute to date include webinars, such as the "Global access forum", where an expert in England presented to the industry on export information, via Skype. The Institute has also developed an I-app on OH&S for the Digital Printer in the Hub that participants complete prior to using this printer.

ACHIEVEMENTS

Lack of business skills was one of the many concerns raised by all ten industry clusters, which influenced Institute staff to develop small business training programs that participants can access online via webinars, as well as project work with mentors assigned to support them in their business skill development.

The key outcome of the Textile and Fashion Hub is to provide industry with the knowledge in innovation, supply chain management, advanced technology and business acumen. By achieving this it hopes to ensure that the SMEs in the sector can thrive in the current and future economy, which continuously evolves.

The Council of Textile & Fashion Industries of Australia has successfully represented Textile, Clothing and Footwear industries since the 1940s...

FIGURE 1. SNAPSHOT OF TFIA TEXTILE AND FASHION INDUSTRIES OF AUSTRALIA (TFIA)

The Council of Textile & Fashion Industries of Australia (TFIA) has successfully represented Textile, Clothing and Footwear (TCF) industries since the 1940s. From big business to small and medium enterprises, from senior executive to junior employee, from teacher to student, all are welcome as members of the TFIA.

TFIA is a national body governed by a Board and Executive elected from the TFIA membership and administered from a head office based in Melbourne. From: <http://www.tfia.com.au/about-tfia>

FIGURE 2. SNAPSHOT OF KANGAN INSTITUTE

With more than 40,000 enrolments each year, Kangan Institute is a major training provider for the automotive, aerospace, health and nursing sectors and for Indigenous education. It also has a strong presence in a range of industries such as fashion and business as well as justice and legal.

It offers a flexible, innovative place of learning with a rich multicultural atmosphere with programs are delivered across six campuses across Melbourne. From: <http://www.kangan.edu.au/>

The TFIA Textile and Fashion Hub, a collaborative project with the TFIA, won the Victorian Industry Collaboration Award at the 2012 Victorian Training Awards.



INDUSTRY INTERVIEWEE: JO-ANN KELLOCK, CEO, COUNCIL OF TEXTILE AND FASHION INDUSTRIES OF AUSTRALIA LIMITED

What is special about the Hub?

We're in the business of change and imparting knowledge. When people are relaxed and comfortable they're best able to listen and absorb. So it was important to create a supportive environment or an ecosystem within the system, within the TAFE structure. That's what we regard the Hub as: it's like a little eco-system working within a much bigger TAFE system to create a link with industry and support. It is a place for SMEs to develop their capabilities.

One of the great spinoffs for this project is the opportunity to develop learning resources that are up to date with the leading edge equipment and current information from technologists working in the Hub; and put those resources on a learning platform which is online, and tied to the training package.

What do employers want from the Hub?

The employers want their staff to be trained, with minimal interruptions. They need their staff to be competent. So what they're actually saying is they want skills sets and they want them now. The challenge is to deliver them in the most efficient way possible. And then employers want, perhaps next week or next month or in six months' time, another skills set, because they've bought another piece of machinery: that's the way they want training. But they won't release their staff to sign up for a Diploma in Fashion Design and Technology that runs over 18 months. That's too big a commitment in the current competitive environment.

What were the initial drivers behind TFIA's relationship with Kangan Institute?

We identified that the government programs had looked after the larger businesses which control 50% of the market but that group really only represents about 14% of the businesses. We were looking for a project to support the SMEs who employ 20 people or less and who make up 86% of the TCF industry. That was the real driver behind this Hub project.

If industry is to change, then 86% of businesses can't be ignored. We are a fragmented industry and we wanted to put a stake in the ground, and nominate a space like the Hub. The Hub gives a place for the industry to gravitate towards, to meet, to congregate, to share, to learn. So they were the main drivers.

Kangan was most receptive to the idea, of all the people that we met: they'd had experience in dealing with industry, they knew what industry wanted, they talked the same talk, they just got it, and we moved on from there.

Are you building skills for the new economy?

Yes. When you have an outsourced manufacturing sector like we have, the National Broadband Network becomes extremely important because of the exchange of electronic files and the need for the interoperability of software programs.

The companies ask us, particularly the SMEs, which computer program do I choose? Which is the best program for my application? So one of the things we do in the Hub is help them identify digital solutions: for example, Should I use a CAD program? Which one do I pick? What's best for me? That's a key role that we play at the Hub.

How is Kangan Institute working with the Hub to build these skills?

If you look within the Kangan team they have 'lean' expertise, they have knitting technology expertise and digital printing technology expertise. They're training up their staff to operate new whole garment knitters and seamless knitwear and digital printing and 3D printing. They're quickly training their staff up and they're also liaising directly with industry. At the same time that they're developing their skills, they're also bringing to the table expertise in e-learning platforms.

TFIA's role is to lead industry into the Hub and hand them over to Kangan staff. They work with the clients to deliver specialised training, or whatever it is the company's after. There's such goodwill between both parties who want to ensure the project's success.

What is an example of skills for the new economy being developed by the Hub's users?

The QR Code Pop-Up Window Project started off with the Design Cluster. They went to Little Lonsdale in the legal district in the city and put a digital display in the window of a café, and generated interest around the sign. I think all up it cost the cluster about \$450. It wasn't a lot of money because they all contributed: to come up with that display, the shoe designer worked with an accessory designer who worked with a dress designer who worked with a graphic artist.

What is good practice about the Institute's work with the Hub?

Kangan are definitely flexible and that's to their credit. It is industry's job to keep pushing the boundaries and its TAFE's job to try and accommodate what industry wants, and the tension between the two is what produces the successful outcome. Kangan has given us flexibility: they're accessible, the training is tailored to the needs of industry, and their people are well qualified and/or very willing to learn.

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