



Sri Lanka National Skills Passport Project

Innovation and Learning Practice

Bridging Innovation and Learning in TVET (BILT) Project

Submitted by Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission, Sri Lanka

The National Skills Passport is a digital portfolio of a worker's skills and qualifications, references and informally acquired knowledge, all conveniently located on a smart identification card. Migrant labourers and workers returning from abroad can use the card to prove qualifications and work experience and connect to continuing education or employment opportunities. The National Skills Passport facilitates upward mobility in employment and entrepreneurial opportunities for people in Sri Lanka and beyond.

Start date: July 2020

Type of implementing institution: National body

Target group: Returning and potential migrants

Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission, Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka's Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission (TVEC) was established in 1990 as the apex body for TVET in Sri Lanka. TVEC is responsible for maintaining the quality of TVET courses while serving as the qualification authority. TVEC is further responsible for planning, promoting and coordinating skills development in Sri Lanka.

Description of activities

At first glance, the National Skills Passport developed by TVEC in Sri Lanka is just a normal card that might be found in anyone's wallet. However, the National Skills Passport is actually a smart card with digital information certifying the cardholder's national vocational qualification and at least one year of documented work experience. It was developed with partners from government, the International Labour Organization and the national employers' organization in Sri Lanka, the Employers' Federation of Ceylon.

The card connects different stakeholders, including employees, employers, qualification bodies and labour market intermediaries on a web-based database that recognizes skilled expertise and certified experience. The National Skills Passport facilitates:

- Recognition of qualified skills for prospective migrant workers, including informal experience
- Organization of gap filling programmes
- Assessment and certification of skills and experience obtained in the country of employment (for returning migrant workers)
- Entrepreneurship, up-skilling and higher learning for migrants
- Upward mobility in employment for better wages and working conditions

Relevance

Why is a common method of documenting vocational qualification and work experience necessary?

Sri Lanka has long sought to build a more skilled workforce for its domestic and foreign employment markets. The emphasis on skills has been a mainstay of successive government manifestos. Skills development can be facilitated by the uniform and unbureaucratic system established with the National Skills Passport. At the same time, labour market demand for low and semi-skilled workers in the international market is fuelled by fast growing economies, with Sri Lankans often traveling abroad to take these jobs. When they return, the quick and easy National Skills Passport process for recognizing and certifying their skills helps reduce unemployment and encourages entrepreneurship development.

What challenges do workers face when they return to Sri Lanka?

When workers leave Sri Lanka for work in construction, hospitality, care giving or other sectors, they gain valuable skills and competencies. However, these are often informal, which leads to difficulty in formal recognition and certification of what they have learned. At the same time, employers in Sri Lanka – who require certified labour – often cannot find enough qualified people to fill all available jobs. The National Skills Passport bridges this gap and creates opportunities for returning workers to take part in the labour market in jobs that match their level of competency and qualification.

Added value

How does documenting qualifications and competencies improve prospects for workers, employers and the economy?

The National Skills Passport helps to streamline migrant workers and returnee workers by skill-type while bridging gaps in the labour market, both locally and overseas. It identifies new qualifications for returning migrant workers and is linked to a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) platform that includes recognition of prior learning. In a time when Sri Lanka faces 'brain drain' in some sectors, the National Skills Passport helps attract migrant workers to industries such as construction, which are currently seeing high demand but not enough workers to bridge the gap. Finally, the task of matching skills to opportunities for future employment is easier through the online National Skills Passport platform.

What options are available to workers for additional education opportunities or other employment avenues?

By identifying and promoting skills recognition, the National Skills Passport provides returning migrants

with a starting point for recognizing and certifying their level of competence in the Sri Lankan NVQ framework, helping them take control of their professional development. They can then take advantage of upskilling opportunities to pursue higher NVQ levels while working in better paying jobs that match their recognized and documented competencies. In addition, the National Skills Passport promotes soft loan schemes and encourages returning migrants to pursue entrepreneurship and self-employment.

How is participation in the programme coordinated among stakeholders?

The application for the National Skills Passport is available online at www.nsp.gov.lk. There, applicants can view the details of the qualifications and add relevant work experience. Employers have separate access to the system where they work with TVEC to confirm the experience of the applicant. Workers can also acquire exemptions from courses or modules already completed. Finally, the physical card contains a QR code with all information relating to a worker's qualifications and work experience. This allows potential employers to promptly check a worker's credentials, which are backed by a qualification authority such as TVEC.

Transferability

Is the National Skills Passport recognized outside of Sri Lanka?

The National Skills Passport will eventually connect with a Regional Qualification Framework for greater employment visibility and ease of skills migration to and from other countries and regions. Some countries in the region, such as Bangladesh, are already in the process of benchmarking this initiative through the ILO. Countries like India are also keen to learn from this initiative and taken part in several experience sharing sessions conducted by TVEC Sri Lanka.

What are the limitations of the National Skills Passport?

In certain contexts, there could be legal challenges and/or hurdles to implementation. This means the National Skills Passport project is not automatically replicable in every context; situational analysis within a certain context to identify issues and challenges is necessary.

The National Skills Passport is one of the BILT project's Innovation and Learning Practices that address systemic challenges within the five work streams of the project. Specifically, the TVEC initiative addresses migration and TVET:



Migration and TVET

Accelerating the integration of migrants into their host communities, and allowing them to become productive members of the workforce

Additional Innovation and Learning Practices cover the following areas:



New Qualifications and Competencies



Entrepreneurship in TVET



Greening TVET



Digitalization in TVET

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For more information about this practice:
www.nsp.gov.lk

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Design: Christiane Marwecki

About the BILT Project

UNESCO-UNEVOC's Bridging Innovation and Learning in TVET (BILT) project is a reference point for innovation and learning in TVET. It utilizes the international UNEVOC Network to create opportunities for collaboration and a platform for bridging innovation and learning between Europe, Africa and the Asia-Pacific region. BILT complements developments at the national level in supporting innovative, market-oriented and attractive modes of learning and cooperation in TVET.

The BILT project explores the process of identifying, integrating and implementing new qualifications and competencies in TVET. This is known as the 'three I's process'. In addition to the broad focus on new qualifications and competencies, BILT addresses four complementary themes: Digitalization and TVET, Greening TVET, Entrepreneurship in TVET, and Migration and TVET.

For more information, please visit

www.unevoc.unesco.org/bilt

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New Qualifications and Competencies in TVET

- **Identifying** new qualifications and competencies in a timely manner;
- **Integrating** them into appealing and flexible curricula and training regulations; and
- **Implementing** them in innovative training approaches

Entrepreneurship in TVET

Unlocking the potential of innovative entrepreneurial activities and fostering entrepreneurial culture

Greening TVET

Responding to new development paradigms for sustainability and reduced environmental impact

Digitalization in TVET

Providing response to new skills demands, as technology has permeated the world of work and is changing the profile of jobs

Migration and TVET

Accelerating the integration of migrants into their host communities, and allowing them to become productive members of the workforce

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