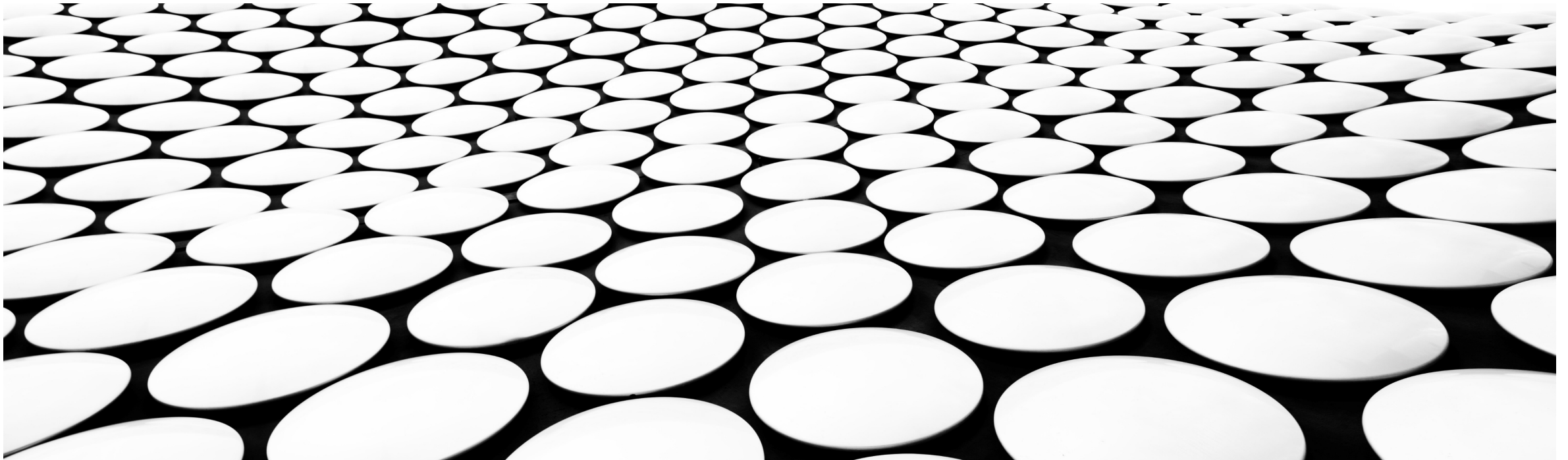


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TRANSITIONING TO MULTIPLE AND FLEXIBLE PATHWAYS TO WORK OR FURTHER STUDY – THE AUSTRALIAN EXPERIENCE

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INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

- Recognize honourable members of Parliament, distinguished guests from government agencies, the private sector, civil service and development partners.
- I consider it a privileged to be invited here to have this conversation with you today.
- A detailed briefing paper will also be available to you with the conference papers.
- The topic for my presentation today is: **Transiting to multiple and flexible learning pathways to work or further study: Lessons from international case studies.**
- **Lessons learnt from the Australian approach to creating flexible vocational pathways in senior secondary schools.** In session 2 we will look at other international approaches.
- **Not in any way meant as a suggested road map for the TVET reforms here in Sri Lanka.**
- Aligned where possible to the current ‘**transformational**’ reform process and development of the **National Education Policy Framework (NEPF) 2023-2033.**
- An assumption the **skills sector in Sri Lanka is not broken**, however, as stated in the NEPF, Sri Lanka needs to **TRANSFORM** its Education Sector with a sense of urgency.
- From a change management perspective, **promote these as efforts to continuously improve** the system.

NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY FRAMEWORK (NEPF)

My presentation is aligned to several key NEPF policy areas, which are key to the Pathways discussion;

- (6.5) Tertiary Education shall be as per [learning outcomes in Sri Lanka Qualification Framework \(SLQF\)](#).*
- (6.7) [Skills electives will be available at Senior Secondary level \(Years 10-11\) and skills track at Upper Secondary \(Years 12-13\)](#),*
- (6.16) [All Students shall have the opportunity to complete Senior Secondary Education on time and enter Tertiary Education or Training by Age 18.](#)*
- (6.18) [To ensure a more holistic and well-rounded education, selection of a combination of subjects in either academic and/or skills tracks shall be available to all students in Secondary education, allowing for multiple pathways of progressing along professional or vocational paths](#)*
- (6.21) [Students and their parents/guardians shall be provided with mandatory career guidance regarding Tertiary Education and career pathways at key stages in their Schooling Education.](#)*

RAISING THE IMAGE AND PROFILE OF TVET

The NEPF has highlighted several critical challenges:

1. Unattractiveness of the TVET sector
2. Limitations related to focus on generating employment
3. Inconsistency in quality standards and control.
4. Public investment is entirely supply driven
5. Limitations in considering key impacts on the employability

The question is; to what extent, can the introduction of multiple and flexible pathways to the education and skills systems play a role in meeting some of these challenges?

Part of the answer may lie in the Australian experience.

BACKGROUND TO 30 YEARS OF TVET REFORM

- Major reforms commenced around 1990, direct result of “Australia Reconstructed”, a private sector led mission to Europe to investigate those countries which had overcome balance of payments constraints in ways which produced low unemployment, low inflation and economic growth.
- Labour market and training policies were of critical importance to skills training planning.
- Australia's international competitiveness would depend largely on how successful it can exploit up-to-date manufacturing knowledge and skills-intensive products and processes.
- The training system must be “demand driven” with “competency-based training”; must be industry driven and stronger union involvement.
- Essential to move from “time served” apprenticeships and training to progress on competence, AND, to make TVET and skills training available in schools and in the workplace.
- Later, the introduction of a competitive training market, TVET funding open to competition, including by universities and the private sector.

REFORMING THE AUSTRALIAN TVET SECTOR

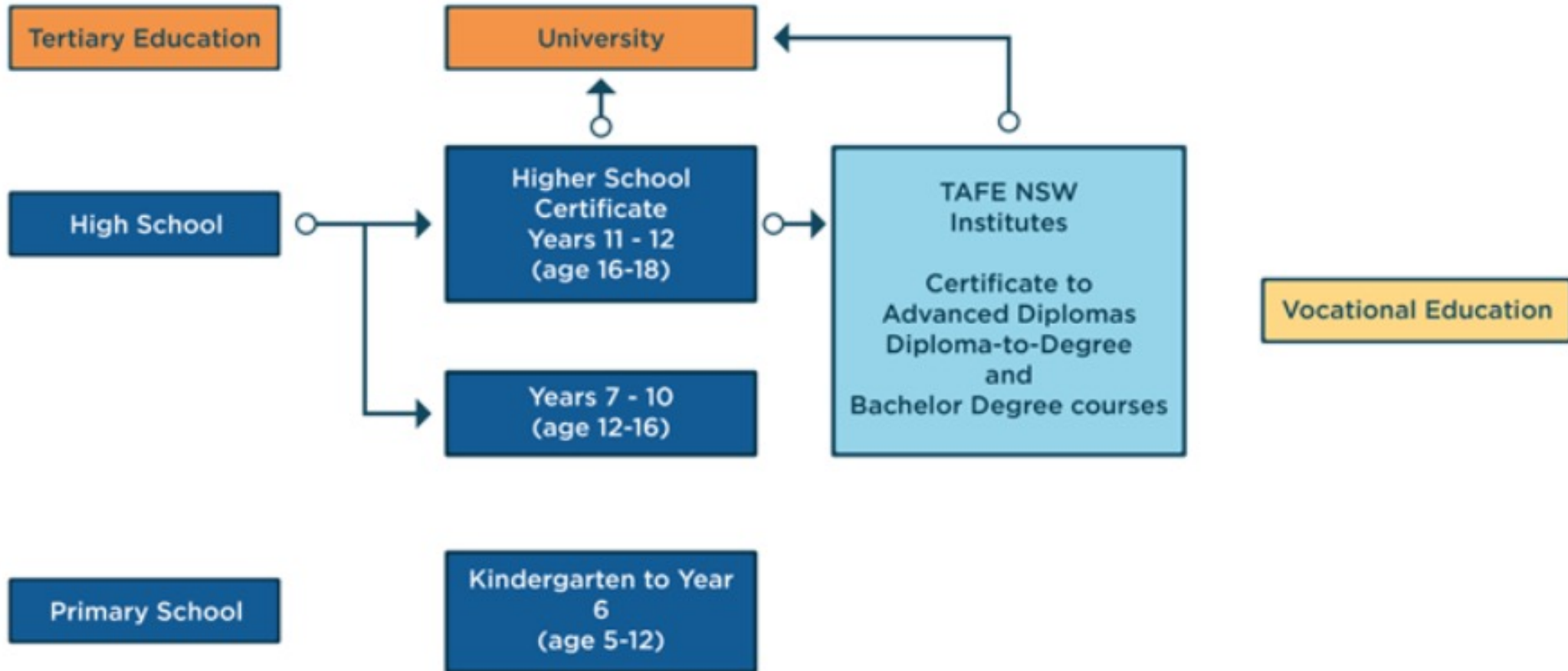
At the national strategy and policy level, the changes were characterized by:

- A national governance structure of ministers sitting under a [National Cabinet](#).
- Policy and legislation for an “[industry driven and supported](#)” TVET system with the priority focus on jobs.
- [State/territories delegated to implement the national system](#) governance, structure, policy and funding.
- Creation of a [national regulatory and quality assurance system](#); Australian Skills and Quality Authority (ASQA) and the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) for Higher Education standards.
 - i. quality standards for the establishment and operation of training providers, and
 - ii. quality standards for the development and delivery of national qualifications.
- A ten level qualifications framework. (AQF)
- The [move from supply based to demand driven training](#), through the development of national occupational and competency-based standards and training packages, developed through industry skills councils.
- [Funding to training providers based on Training Plan](#) aligned to labour market demand.
- Addressing the institutional (TAFE) impact of moving from a supply side to demand driven training market.

SECONDARY SCHOOL VOCATIONAL PATHWAYS IN AUSTRALIA

- The underlying premise behind Australia's school pathways programs is that, "Work in all its forms, paid and unpaid, plays a central role in our lives" and that [individuals will need to be flexible and responsive to change along their career and study pathway.](#)
- Publicly funded government school system and private schools, receive government funding. [Vocational pathways are mandatory offerings in public schools while the private system see these as optional.](#)
- The secondary school structure is made up Stage 5, years 9-10; student sits for a **School Certificate**. They can then proceed to the **Higher School Certificate**, Stage 6, years 11-12. [Vocational pathways are available to students studying both the School Certificate and the Higher School Certificate, with credit transfer between the two.](#)

VOCATIONAL PATHWAYS IN NSW AUSTRALIA



AUSTRALIA'S JOURNEY TO VOCATIONAL PATHWAYS

- Around the time of [Australia Reconstructed](#), NSW education initiated the first 'accredited' pathways program in schools called the [Joint Secondary Schools TAFE \(JSST\)](#) program.
- [Initially only available to year 11 and 12 students](#) with the objective to provide them with subject alternatives to what was then a mainly academic pathway with a very strong focus on university admission.
- In the early days, the JSST program offered [courses that were not industry accredited or recognized](#).
- Seen as an [option to “stream” low achieving and often problem students](#) away from the academic pathways, not necessarily to give them genuine employment opportunities.
- [Schools “looked down” on JSST](#), generally not recognized as a legitimate part of the curriculum offerings.
- Seen as an [“add on” to the curriculum](#). In many instances, students were only given permission to attend vocational courses outside of normal school hours or as an alternative to the sports program.

EARLY PERCEPTIONS OF VOCATIONAL PATHWAYS

- Courses were very traditional in that young girls were encouraged to study traditional female related occupations, like cooking, hospitality, and tourism while males were directed into traditional areas like carpentry, metal fabrication and automotive.
- Because the courses were at a low vocational level, labour demand did not really come into the decision-making process of a school to offer courses.
- Generally, JSST was not valued by the school and as such not valued by students or parents; employers did not recognize the value of the TVET courses; held little industry relevance.
- Parental aspiration their child should only look to a university education, not necessarily employment driven.
- Trades and TAFE related vocational occupations were generally not held in high esteem.
- High school leaver rates, increasingly high youth unemployment and the concomitant social problems was seen by the government as needing immediate intervention.



QUESTION TIME

SCHOOL CERTIFICATE PATHWAY - YEARS 9 - 10

- TVET pathways not necessarily appropriate for all schools, or for all students. It should be seen as one strategy within a suite of strategies used by schools to address engagement, retention and participation in education and training, leading to work.
- The support of the relevant school system authority and RTO is essential prior to schools offering TVET courses to students in Years 9 and 10. Considerations when offering access to TVET courses:
 - the needs and interests of individual students
 - local and regional workforce and community needs
 - local infrastructure and delivery partnerships
 - the availability of appropriate training pathways in different industry areas
 - the longer-term planning and logistics required to provide training pathways through Years 9 and 10 and into Years 11 and 12
 - the overall capacity of the school to deliver the program

SCHOOL CERTIFICATE PATHWAY - YEARS 9 - 10

- TVET students **must complete the mandatory 'academic' curriculum requirements** for Stage 5, including the development of essential literacy and numeracy skills.
- TVET **courses delivered in schools lead to Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) qualifications**, delivered and assessed in accordance with the AQF and must meet ASQA compliance being delivered by a Registered Training Organisation (RTO).
- **Delivery of a pathways program must be through an RTO**, which may be a school (as a part of a school system RTO), a TAFE NSW college or other TVET 'private' provider
- If studied in **years 9-10, TVET courses should create pathways that allow students credit into 'like' courses in years 11-12 to** achieve higher level qualifications and skills
- **Students in Years 9 and 10 are counselled to only undertake a TVET course** if it suits their individual needs, that is their future study or employment priorities

HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE PATHWAY – YEARS 11 - 12

- Students who wish to stay on for the **final 2 years of schooling undertake the Higher School Certificate**. They can undertake multiple study pathways dependent on the mix of academic and/or vocational pathway courses/units of competence, available at the school they attend.
- **Students are encouraged to attain the best HSC result they can** by choosing courses they are good at, are interested in but above all, are useful to their further study or employment aspirations. Students have access to a range of school based, on-line and specialist vocational and career advisors to help them make the right course and subject choice.
- **Student age** is an important consideration in the offering of vocational courses as students need to meet relevant industrial relations (union) employment requirements, particularly for on-the job training which may require them to use machinery. Schools tend to offer the higher-level industry courses in years 11 and 12 where the student age is around 16-18 years old.
- Where applicable in the curriculum, **work placement for school students must be completed**, as is the case with all accredited training, before the student is eligible to receive the qualification.

HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE PATHWAY – YEARS 11 - 12

- More than 100 vocational courses in the HSC; a school may not have the necessary resources to offer all subjects. In fact, most do not so a school may have to partner with a local TAFE college, a private provider and/or an industry workplace to give students access to all the essential resources to undertake the course.
- AQF accredited vocational courses and/or subjects studied in Years 9-10 are mutually recognized and have credit transfer towards the same or similar courses/subjects studied in the HSC (years 11-12). The same principle that applies to all AQF courses/subjects/units of competence.
- To be industry credible, the decision of a school to implement vocational pathways must be made in consideration of their ability to meet all the appropriate regulatory and quality standards. If delivering accredited TVET courses, schools must operate under the same conditions as any other registered training organization, i.e., they must be able to meet the same quality standards to delivery AQF qualifications.
- A primary destination of the HSC is entrance to university where students' scores from their various subjects count towards an Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR). Not every vocational course count towards the ATAR however all AQF accredited vocational courses have mutual recognition to a qualification they sit within.

HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE PATHWAY – YEARS 11 - 12

Students have several study options or “Pathways” to their Higher School Certificate.

1. **Board Developed courses** are the large number of courses set and examined by Education Standards Authority that also contribute to the calculation of the ATAR.
2. **Board Endorsed courses** are developed by schools, TAFE and universities. They count towards the HSC but do not have an HSC examination and do not contribute towards the calculation of the ATAR.
3. **Special education (Life Skills)** - If a student has special education needs they can attain the HSC by studying Life Skills courses.
4. **Vocational Education and Training (TVET)** - TVET courses can be studied either at school or through TAFE NSW and other training providers, depending on availability and some courses require a minimum number of hours in the work place. TVET courses contribute towards the HSC and Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) TVET credentials, and are recognised by industry and employers throughout Australia.

HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE PATHWAY – YEARS 11 - 12

Pathway	Description
1. Accumulating	Students can take up to five consecutive years to finish their studies.
2. Repeating	Students can repeat one or more courses within the five years without penalty.
3. Transferring credit and recognition of prior learning (RPL)	Students may be able to count TAFE or other accredited vocational courses from private or workplace based educational institutions towards their HSC as ‘credit transfer.’
4. Accelerating	A student may be able to accelerate their progress in a course.
5. Studying during an apprenticeship or traineeship	A student can complete a school-based apprenticeship or traineeship while at school.

SCHOOL BASED APPRENTICESHIPS AND TRAINEESHIPS (SBAT)

- Available to students as part of their HSC pattern of study, early entry option at Year 10 finishing in year 12, follows a vocational pathway.
- Gives a student paid on-the-job training while completing secondary school; combine part-time employment with training toward a nationally recognised TVET qualification.
- Students can receive credit towards their Higher School Certificate and any AQF accredited subjects/units will count towards other relevant AQF qualifications.
- The SBAT follows the same legal and industrial pathway as a non-school apprenticeship; student sign a training contract and training plan with an RTO.
- The school must approve so student can attend work and training during the school week.
- Available in a wide range of jobs and industry areas, with following benefits:
 - make a start on their career before finishing school and get paid for time spent working and learning
 - get hands-on training that leads to a VET qualification and provides credit towards school
 - finish school with a competitive edge in the employment market.

MANAGING THE TVET REFORM CHANGE PROCESS

The process of TVET reform in Australia was complex and challenging and the impact on the education and employment sectors was grossly underestimated. **We will be talking more about this in the following Panel Session however I will make a few points here as cautions going forward.**

It is essential to have a clearly defined proposal for change, a consultation plan and strategy that is publicly available and engages stakeholders; have governance groups to drive the consultation process and provide options to government on a final model(s); consider a multi-stage implementation process but work towards the final and 'big' picture; and ensure the final model is adequately resourced and can deliver the change objectives.

- Collaborative engagement to manage the change process so it is not seen as imposed – change needs to have champions within the system, not done to them but done by them; set hard and fast timeframes
- Develop a scope and timeline of the reforms, keep at the strategic level (room to move depending on feedback from consultations)
- Consider a multi stage process but the full picture must be made clear to all stakeholders.
- Small but critical steps, do not try and achieve it all at once, ensure no delays once started.
- The change process must be resourced.
- Where appropriate, make legislative changes to place a legal structure around the changes.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The reform process itself is very similar to the Pathways model in that it is a journey with multiple destinations, not all of them can be reached at the same time. The message to be communicated is “we are setting out on a long journey to improve the quality and relevance of the TVET system for the benefit of students, employers and Sri Lanka.”

1. **Managing the Change Process**; is I believe, the highest priority with a strong focus on:
 - a. **Prepare the policy, legislation and change management approaches as a “whole system approach”** and be sure that everyone knows how the reforms will be implemented and staged/phased and what to expect and over what period of time.
 - b. **Identify the key risks to implementation**, pre-empt where you will get resistance and push back on the changes; i.e., schools being challenged to change their core business – moving from traditional curriculum and assessment models to competency-based training and progression, schools working with other players who may take control. Be prepared to change the model and/or the approach, if there are early signs it is not working.
 - c. **Engage with all the key stakeholders** before, during and after the change process to implement the reforms and be very public.
 - d. **Essential to have a comprehensive communication strategy** to ensure regular feedback to all stakeholders.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 2. Selection of TVET Pathways;** Start with the achievable; currently many countries are also reforming their TVET systems with a new focus on Green Skills, Artificial Intelligence, Advanced Technology skills and so on. My advice is not to be too ambitious, look at pathways areas that are reasonably easy to implement but still in priority employment areas, then build into new pathways as you build the capacity of the schools and TVET institutions to cope with the physical and human resource demands required to implement the pathway.
- 3. Engagement with industry and employers;** Essential the private sector willingly engages in the reform process and sees the potential benefits of a highly skilled workforce as the return on their investment.
- 4. Partnerships and collaboration;** with employers, other public and private providers, other schools, with employers, with other organizations who you can leverage to provide support for infrastructure, joint study models, employment, curriculum development, workplace training etc, and lastly
- 5. Capacity building and investment;** in the TVET pathway system you are striving to achieve, it is critical to promote the critical importance of students having access to accredited (industry, employer, institution, and regulator recognized) pathways that lead to work and/or further study. **So, the most important conversation is around student outcomes rather than institutional processes.**