Sustainable Development Goals Coordination Centre

SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT GOALS
TAMIL NADU

"Tamil Nadu SDG Vision for Skilling, Employment and Livelihoods"

Report

Round table on

Bridging the Gap:

Enhancing Apprenticeship Engagement in Tamil Nadu

In partnership with :

- National Skill development Corporation
- TN Skill Development Corporation
- The Southern India Chamber Of Commerce And Industry (SICCI)

Date:25th October 2024

Background

Enhancing apprenticeship engagement at the state level can drive workforce development and bridge skill gaps in key industries. To achieve this, states can collaborate with local industries to identify high-demand sectors, develop tailored programs, and streamline the process for employers and participants. Implementing incentives, can further encourage engagement. Additionally, raising awareness through targeted outreach and partnerships with community colleges, training centres, and local organizations can increase apprenticeship participation. Providing robust support services, such as mentorship and career counselling, also ensures apprentices are well-prepared and supported in their training.

Thinking together is a beginning towards action!

The round table managed to gather representatives from State and Central Govt Departments responsible for implementing the apprenticeship schemes in Tamil Nadu – Board of Apprenticeship Training (BoAT), Ministry of Education GoI, National Skills Development Corporation (NSDC), Regional Directorate of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Ministry of Skills Development and Entrepreneurship GoI, Directorate of Employment & Training, Tamil Nadu Skill Development Corporation, GoTN. Approximately 70 companies who are engaging or interested to engage apprentices in their respective industries participated in the round table. All stakeholders actively engaged in the round table deliberating on ways to increase apprenticeship engagement in Tamil Nadu.

Delegates attended

1. Ms J Innocent Divya, IAS, Managing Director, Tamil Nadu Skill Development Corporation (TNSDC)
2. Mr Ganapathi R, Past President SICCI and Chairman of Trigyn Technologies
3. Mr Balasubramanian Munuswamy, Development Goals Specialist, SDG Co-ordination Centre (SDGCC), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
4. Dr. M. Vijayabaskar Additional Full time Member, State Planning Commission, Govt of Tamil Nadu
5. Mr Damodaran, Deputy Director, Regional Directorate of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (RDSDE)
6. Mr Sri Gaurav Singh, Director, Ministry of Education, Dept. of Higher Education, Govt. of India
7. Mr Jan Filip, Foreign Trade and Trade Affairs, Saxony Trade and Investment Cooperation
8. Mr S Krishnamurthy, Vice President, Brakes India Limited
9. Mr K Balaji, Vice President - People & Culture, Delphi TVS Technologies Limited

Snippets from the round table discussion:

- **Mr. George Koshi, Chair, SICCI Employability and Skilling Committee** and Director, Learning and Development at Sify Technologies introduced the panel of speakers and took the role of moderating the roundtable discussion.

- **Mr. Ganapathi R, Past President of SICCI** and Chairman of Trigyn Technologies gave the welcome address emphasizing the importance of increasing apprenticeship engagement to bridge education and employment gaps for Tamil Nadu's youth. Highlighting the apprenticeship model's success globally, he pointed out that only 0.1% of India's workforce is engaged in apprenticeships compared to 4% in Germany.

- **Mr. Balasubramanian M, Development Goals Specialist SDG Co-ordination Centre (SDGCC), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)** presented the theme address on "Enhancing Apprenticeship Engagement in Tamil Nadu" giving the context of employment, employability and the apprenticeship uptake in Tamil Nadu, various central and state government incentives for apprenticeships, emphasising the importance of apprenticeships as a bridge between academic education and industrial skills to improve youth employability and meet the demands of a rapidly evolving TN economy. Highlighted global and national best practices and suggested measures such as establishing a unified portal for apprenticeships, linking opportunities to college placements, forming an Industry-Academia-Government task force, and creating digital awareness campaigns. Expanding apprenticeship engagement in underutilized sectors like tourism, hospitality, and BFSI is also recommended.

- **Ms. J Innocent Divya, IAS**, Managing Director of the Tamil Nadu Skill Development Corporation (TNSDC) highlighted several initiatives undertaken by TNSDC to enhance skill development and employability in Tamil Nadu, emphasizing bridging the gap between education and industry through targeted programs.
  Education Sector Initiatives:

Ms. Divya discussed TNSDC's steps to improve college enrolment rates, particularly among underprivileged students. Over the past two years, TNSDC identified and supported 2.47 lakh students who had not applied to higher education due to financial or personal constraints. This initiative, run with district-level oversight, has enabled around 91,000 students to gain admission to arts, science, and ITIs, significantly boosting enrolment. Further investments in educational infrastructure include upgrading 71 ITIs and 44 polytechnic colleges to Industry 4.0 standards, aiming to create a robust talent pipeline for industry. This is part of a broader government commitment to align technical education with industry demands, with the Tamil Nadu government allocating 2,800 crores for this purpose.

Enhancing Employability:

Ms. Divya emphasized the need to enhance employability among graduates, particularly engineering students. New curricula now include a six-month internship with a 12-credit requirement, aimed at integrating real-world applications and developing practical skills. English language proficiency, communication skills, and digital literacy have been embedded in the first and second-year syllabi, addressing gaps in employability. Additionally, students undergo diagnostic tests to assess and support their communication and digital skills. From the fourth semester onward, students receive specialized training in sector-specific technologies (e.g., medical coding for pharma students, banking for commerce students) to better prepare them for job markets. This program, developed in

collaboration with industry experts, includes industry-specific use cases and hybrid skill-based learning models where 70% of the content focuses on practical applications. Assessment is now also independent and skill-based, with marks awarded by industry partners.

Supporting Vulnerable and Marginalized Youth:

Ms. Divya also discussed TNSDC's targeted programs to support marginalized communities. TNSDC identified a cohort of 3.5 lakh students from vulnerable backgrounds (e.g., tribal communities, children from single-parent households) and is actively working to mobilize these students for skill development programs and apprenticeships. TNSDC collaborates with various government departments to streamline support, giving agencies login credentials to monitor and achieve mobilization targets. So far, 3,000 candidates have been mobilized for skills training.

Finishing School Program:

For dropouts and job-seeking graduates outside formal education, TNSDC introduced the "Non-Government Finishing School" program. Partnering industries train these candidates, and TNSDC assesses and certifies the skills acquired. This program enables industries to hire skilled workers directly after training, offering a clear pathway for employment.

Expanding Apprenticeships and Industry Collaboration

Ms. Divya highlighted efforts to integrate apprenticeships into degree programs, such as B.Sc. and B.Tech, in partnership with industries like Tata and Yamaha. These programs provide students with on-the-job training alongside academic study, culminating in dual qualifications

(e.g., a degree and practical work experience). TNSDC has established partnerships with the Tata Institute of Social Sciences and others to help implement such programs. The "Learn and Grow" initiative, aimed at embedding apprenticeship within degree programs, invites industries to designate apprenticeships as credited, non-employee roles, giving students structured training. Additionally, TNSDC has been dual-recognized by the National Council for Vocational Education as both an awarding and assisting body, enabling the corporation to develop advanced diplomas and vocational certifications.

- **Mr. Damodaran, Regional Directorate of Skill Development** and Entrepreneurship (RDSDE) highlighted the scheme highlights, incentives for industries and efforts taken in strengthening Tamil Nadu's apprenticeship ecosystem. He noted a disparity between the number of registered establishments (4,692) and those actively participating in apprenticeship programs (4,018), citing low responsiveness from businesses and candidate reluctance as primary obstacles.

- **Gaurav Singh, Director of the Ministry of Education's Department of Higher Education** shared insights on the importance of internships and their role in preparing students for the workforce. He emphasized the need for a structured apprenticeship program sandwiched with

academic credits and highlighted the recent MoE announcement of Graduate apprenticeship program which allows final year graduate students to engage in apprenticeship enabling students to earn while learning and skilling under the guidance of the industry. He also raised the concern on apprenticeship completion rates of TN (stands at 35%) are critical for measuring its success. Mr. Singh pointed out the advantages of apprenticeship over the recently announced internship program a mismatch between available internship opportunities and student demand, with too few options to accommodate the growing number of students.

- **Mr. S. Krishnamurthy, Vice President of Brakes India Limited** outlined the company's strategies and challenges in hiring and retaining skilled talent. Brakes India has established a dedicated skill development center, where employees undergo structured training and assessments every three to six months, with a comprehensive yearly review.

- **Mr. Jan Filip, Project Manager at Saxony Trade and Investment** provided an overview of Germany's vocational education and training (VET) system, highlighting Germany's leading dual education policy and its role in the country's educational and skilling success. Filip concluded by noting Germany's interest in international collaboration on VET, underscoring the benefits of a well-structured apprenticeship model that provides practical training for students while fulfilling workforce needs for companies.

- **Dr. Sagar Agravat, Chair of SICCI's Energy Committee** and Head of Technology Development at L&T discussed L&T's comprehensive approach to training and skill development, highlighting its success in creating a skilled workforce aligned with industry needs. Dr. Agravat noted that while universities cover theoretical knowledge, there is a disconnect between this

knowledge and real-world applications, creating skill gaps. He suggested stronger collaboration between industry and educational institutions to update curricula regularly, ensuring students gain relevant skills before entering the workforce.

- **Mr. Harshit from the NSDC** emphasized the importance of making apprenticeships more popular and accessible in India. He noted that apprenticeships are often undervalued, with both companies and candidates sometimes failing to see their long-term benefits. To address this, NSDC is launching the "On-Page Apprenticeship" campaign, a promotional effort using social media to highlight success stories of apprentices who advanced within organizations.

- **David Eggleston, Deputy Consul General of Australia** in Chennai discussed Australia's collaborative initiatives with India, particularly in education and skills development.

- Several queries raised by participants were addressed by the panel members that ranged from clarifications, advocacy suggestions and policy drivers.

- **Mr. Vijayabaskar, State Planning Commission,** Government of Tamil Nadu concluded the roundtable session summarising the key highlights and suggestions from the roundtable and the need to take forward some of the plausible policy measures that would enhance uptake of apprenticeships in Tamil Nadu. He highlighted the importance of skilling graduates through apprenticeships, reskilling and upskilling the current workforce by implementing robust certification programs that are trustworthy and recognized by employers.

Suggested policy outcomes of the discussion:

Key Insights and Takeaways from the Q&A Segment of the Roundtable Discussion, summarizing the most important points, expert perspectives, and responses to audience questions.

1. *One Industry, One Apprentice* initiative *to improve diversify the apprenticeship engagements in service sectors.* could be a significant step towards strengthening state's apprenticeship ecosystem, aiming to match at least one apprentice to each industry across the state could significantly increase apprenticeship engagement in the state.

   There is low awareness on avenues available for skill development, ways to find jobs or apprenticeship opportunities. When analyzing sector-wise apprenticeship engagements, there are several underutilized sectors, such as Tourism and Hospitality, Banking and Financial Services, and Food Processing, where engagements account for less than 3%. This highlights a gap in matching students with opportunities across these sectors and in ensuring that industries in these fields make these opportunities accessible to students. This initiative is designed to improve industry participation in training skilled workers, thereby creating a direct link between education and employment. This will improve the gaps in information dissymmetry and gap of awareness on taking opportunities with industries. This could be initiated from SICCI to improve the mobilisation of students towards apprenticeship.

   This will also boost the ways to diversify in sectors such as tourism, hospitality, BFSI food processing, IT, apparel, EV, Govt departments etc and widen geographies beyond metropolitan areas.

2. *A targeted digital campaign can play a pivotal role in raising awareness and building capacity among industries, aspirants and academic institutions to engage effectively with apprenticeship programs.*

   By utilizing a range of digital platforms—such as social media, webinars, online forums, and dedicated websites—the campaign can reach a broad audience, helping stakeholders understand the benefits and best practices of integrating apprenticeships into their workforce and academic structures. Tamil Nadu has introduced Training Partner Agencies (TPAs) to mobilize candidates and is conducting the Pradhan Mantri Apprenticeship Awareness Campaign monthly in each district

   NSDC in partnership with UNDP had launched one month long 'Advantage Apprenticeship digital campaign' to increase awareness on apprenticeship. The campaign's goal is to connect young people with employers and promote the importance of apprenticeships. The campaign uses a variety of media to achieve its goals, including: animated video explainers, apprenticeship jingles, human interest stories, and social media initiatives. This will be available in Tamil soon. TNSDC could partner to take the campaign ahead and increase reach in Tamil Nadu

3. There **is a need for deeper industry immersion within the curriculum, allowing students to gain relevant skills and adapt to industry standards, thereby enhancing their competence and confidence for future roles.**

Currently, the **percentage of time that students spend in real-world industry settings as part of their academic curriculum is minimal**. This limited exposure restricts students from gaining practical insights and hands-on experience, which are crucial for their transition from academic knowledge to industry readiness. Germany's dual education system has 70% of student's time in real world industry practical scenario.

4. **Make apprenticeships a mandatory pathway for students who do not secure a job immediately after completing their course**.

By integrating apprenticeships as a follow-up to academic programs, students gain a structured, hands-on platform to enhance their skills and practical knowledge in real-world settings. This approach not only prepares them for eventual job opportunities but also builds their professional experience and confidence. Industry needs to take care of the practical part of the program and the theory part needs to be done by academics.

> *To address the gap between education and employment, it would be beneficial to make apprenticeship a mandatory pathway for students who do not secure a job immediately after completing their course.*

The current high dropout rates of apprenticeship are a concern, as they not only disrupt the learning journey for students but also affect the value industries gain from the program. For industries to fully benefit from the training and potential future workforce, it's essential to focus on improving completion rates.

5. **TNSDC to promote Apprenticeship-Embedded Degree Program with Credits:**

Embedding apprenticeships directly into degree programs and assigning academic credits for these experiences could be a highly effective solution that benefits both students and industries. By integrating apprenticeship training as a part of the academic curriculum, students gain hands-on industry exposure while earning their degree, which bridges the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. We now have **Graduate Apprenticeship GO released recently that requires academic credit requirement.**

For students, this approach offers a unique advantage: they don't have to wait until graduation to begin building industry-relevant skills and experience. Instead, they gain valuable, real-world knowledge and training concurrently with their academic studies. This integration of work-based learning helps students understand industry standards, build relevant competencies, and make informed career choices. Additionally, earning academic credits through apprenticeships makes the experience more meaningful and motivates students to fully engage, as they see it directly contributing to their academic achievements and future employability. For industries, apprenticeship-embedded degree programs provide a steady pipeline of future-ready talent. By engaging students early, industries can shape their learning experience, tailoring training to meet specific skill demands.

> *The Naan Mudhalvan initiative could serve as a powerful model for academic-industry collaboration by adopting a credit-based approach that integrates apprenticeships into degree programs.*

This approach not only strengthens students' practical knowledge but also aligns their skills with industry needs, making them more employable upon graduation.

Additionally, TNSDC has been dual-recognized by the National Council for Vocational Education as both an awarding and assisting body, enabling the corporation to develop advanced diplomas and vocational certifications.

6. **To increase retention and engagement among students, apprenticeships should be designed to inspire and motivate participants by showcasing real success stories**.

Sharing documented experiences of apprentices who have thrived and achieved success across different industries can demonstrate the tangible benefits and career growth potential that apprenticeships offer. When students see relatable examples of others who have turned apprenticeship opportunities into rewarding careers, it can boost their confidence and commitment to completing the program.

> *Moreover, presenting these success stories through multimedia formats—such as videos, interviews, and testimonials—allows students to connect emotionally with the journey of past apprentices.*

This approach can build a sense of possibility and purpose, transforming apprenticeships from merely a step in education to a key milestone in their career journey. Additionally, such documentation can foster a sense of pride and accomplishment among current apprentices, contributing to a positive cycle of engagement, motivation, and retention.

7. **Women in Apprenticeship- a possible tool for women considering to re-enter workforce:**

Currently as per apprenticeship act, only serves for fresh candidates. This may be advocated for change in allowing women who wish to re-enter workforce after their motherhood responsibilities making it easier for women to balance work and home responsibilities.

Matrix on next plan of action

Policy suggestions	Follow action plan
Promoting The One Industry, One Apprentice initiative for diversifying the engagements to different sectors.	Coordinating with SICCI to mobilise students towards industries
Initiating targeted digital campaign for raising awareness	Coordinating with TNSDC to be a part of UNDP-NSDC 'Advantage Apprenticeship digital campaign'
Increasing industry immersion in the academic curriculum	Coordinating NSDC to take this suggestion to discussion
Make apprenticeships a mandatory pathway for students who do not secure a job immediately after completing their course	NSDC to take the action to make this as mandatory
Promote Apprenticeship-Embedded Degree Program with Credits:	- Initiate discussion with TNSDC on the recent G.O. on Graduate apprenticeship with credits - Initiating discussion with TNSDC to develop vocational and advanced courses
Documentation of success stories of apprentices of different industries	SICCI could initiate the action
Supporting women in re-enter the work force	Include apprenticeship in all women supporting schemes

Gallery

Policy Roundtable on

<u>Increasing Apprenticeship Engagement in Tamil Nadu</u>

25th October 2024, 11:00 a.m., M.A. Chidambaram Conference Hall, SICCI, Chennai

Tentative Programme

Moderator: Mr George Koshi, Chair, SICCI Employability and Skilling Committee and Director, Learning and Development at Sify Technologies

10:30 - 10:45 am	*Registration*	
11:00 - 11:05 am	*Welcome Address*	**Mr Ganapathi R** Past President SICCI and Chairman of Trigyn Technologies
11:05 - 11:15 am	*Theme Address*	**Mr Balasubramanian Munuswamy** Development Goals Specialist SDG Co-ordination Centre (SDGCC) United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
11:15 - 11:25 am	*Perspectives from Regional Directorate of Apprenticeship Training, TN*	**Mr Damodaran** **Deputy Director** Regional Directorate of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (RDSDE)
11:25 - 11:35 am	*Role of BOAT in apprenticeship engagement and issues through NATS*	**Mr Sri Gaurav Singh** Director, Ministry of Education, Dept. of Higher Education, Govt. of India
11:35 - 11:45 am	*The education and vocational training system in Germany*	**Mr Jan Filip** Foreign Trade and Trade Affairs, Saxony Trade and Investment Cooperation
11:45 – 11:55 am	***Guest of Honour Address:*** *Opportunities and Challenges for apprenticeship engagement in Tamil Nadu*	**Mr B Vishnu Chandran, IAS** Director, Department of Employment & Training, Govt. of Tamil Nadu
11:55 - 12:10 pm	***Chief Guest Address:*** *The way forward for apprenticeship and initiatives form TNSDC*	**Ms J Innocent Divya, IAS** Managing Director, Tamil Nadu Skill Development Corporation (TNSDC)

12:10 - 12:20 pm	*Industry Perspectives and Challenges*	**Mr S Krishnamurthy** Vice President, Brakes India Limited
12:20 - 12:30 pm	*Industry Perspectives and Challenges*	**Mr K Balaji** Vice President - People & Culture, Delphi TVS Technologies Limited
12:35 – 13:25 pm	**Roundtable Discussion**	
13.25 – 13. 30pm	*Concluding remarks & way forward*	**Dr. M. Vijayabaskar** Additional Full time Member, State Planning Commission, Govt of Tamil Nadu
3:30 – 13:35 pm	*Vote of Thanks*	**SICCI**
LUNCH		