

Identifying WDA's risks in ATO's CIR

The WDA should be commended for having the insight of building Singapore's most valuable resource, its talent. Since such an undertaking requires constant monitoring, we at HireLabs would like to propose methods mitigating high-risks to manageable-risks based on our experience with similar projects that we have worked on with the US Department of Labor, and CADRE (WDA's equivalent in Saudi Arabia).

As the WDA expands the development and implementation of the WSQ, challenges will revolve around managing the quality of training delivered by the Approved Training Organizations (ATOs). Although the WDA has created an elaborate Continuous Improvement Review (CIR) to monitor the ATOs quality, however, initial risk is that the ATO has control over monitoring its own quality and reporting it to on the CIR.

Currently, training centers are seeing an increased financial benefit in becoming an ATO: they can increase their marketability by offering SOAs and WSQ Certifications. Enthusiastic training centers are eager to go through the process to attain the ATO status. It may be useful to **identify potential high-risk areas** such as:

1. The ATOs' ability to implement the System–Evidence–Outcomes (SEO) approach, the Plan Do Check Action (PDCA), and creating a 2 year plan, as required by WDA. This will be particularly challenging for lesser savvy ATOs providing WSQ Certification especially for Community and Social Services, Early Childhood Care & Education, Floristry, Generic Manufacturing Skills, and Landscape.
2. The ATOs' willingness to address the true obstacles that they are facing, and report the grey areas truthfully on CIR reports. Are the ATOs going show themselves in a negative light, knowing that their ATOs status can be downgraded or revoked, leading to the potential of financial harm?

These risks will not be evident to the WDA initially when the number of ATOs is small, because it will be relatively easy for the WDA to monitor the quality of the CIR. However challenges for the WDA will arise when the number of ATOs reaches a tipping point where it will become increasing difficult for the WDA to provide consistency in its level of monitoring of the CIR of each ATO.

Challenges in quality control are a naturally occurring phenomenon in any business *model (private or public)*. Any manufacturer or regulator (*WDA*) who is distributing its products (*WSQ Certification*) through 3rd party distributors (*ATOs*) faces challenges. The challenge becomes high-risk especially when the outcome of the product (*an assessment to gauge the effectiveness of the training*) is left to the distributor (*ATO*). The risk becomes even greater when the crucial elements of the distributor's evaluation (*CIR which include the SEO and the PDCA*) are done by distributor themselves.

The current CIR needs attention, because as the risk increases, the learners become the victims of the system and the credibility of WSQ Certification.

Fortunately non-intrusive steps can be implemented to significantly minimize these challenges and risks. HireLabs would like to schedule an appointment to show WDA our findings when we worked with other government agencies who have taken on similar tasks. In the meeting with WDA, we would like to show strategies to minimize any future challenges associated WDA's CIR.

HireLabs is a leading research firm focusing on building talent. HireLabs was started at Stanford University (US), but has now incorporated in Singapore and is the process of relocating its Intellectual Property to Singapore. Through collaboration with US Department of Labor, we have mapped the core and supplemental competencies of 4,500 different occupations, which are now incorporated into HireLabs' talent assessment tools and technology. With these tools, we develop customized assessments to test an individual's ability to perform in a specific occupation. Our assessments and technology are used in all parts of the corporate lifecycle.