

Developing curriculum for Panama's new state-of-the-art specialist higher technical institute



In 2018, People 1st International led a team of professional experts to develop curriculum for 17 high quality, industry-led training programmes for Panama's new Instituto Técnico Superior Especializado (ITSE), in a large-scale project run by Kings Training Panama SA.

Background

Panama's new Instituto Técnico Superior Especializado (ITSE) was built in 2018 on the instruction of the Government of the Republic of Panama, through the issuance of a Presidential Decree, in response to the gap in technical and vocational education in the country.

ITSE will train up to 5,000 students a year to help develop future talent for growth sectors including logistics, business, electronics, construction, tourism and hospitality, among others. Ultimately, it aims to provide a professional and technical education based on quality, raising the academic position of Panama, increasing the levels of social inclusion and educational development and economic growth.

On behalf of Kings Training Panama SA, People 1st International was appointed as the lead in bringing together a partnership of professional experts, to develop high quality curriculum for 17, industry-led training programs for three schools in ITSE. Having developed the ITSE business plan in 2016, we were well placed to undertake this important project, due to the knowledge of ITSE and its plans for curriculum design and teacher training.

Our Solutions

Operating as the core project team in the curriculum development, we established a team of multidisciplinary professionals to ensure that the required expertise was available in response to all aspects of the project specification.

In addition to sector and curriculum experts procured from the best in class UK colleges, the project was led by our highly experienced project management team who have vast experience of instructional design and development of vocational training, both in the UK and internationally.

The development of the 17 industry led programmes involved four key components:

1. Validation of curriculum via a mapping exercise

We initially mapped the proposed 17 programmes, made up of over 300 subjects, against UK qualifications, including BTEC's or their equivalent and apprenticeship standards. Our mapping report identified any gaps as well as any extra elements in comparison to those offered in the UK. This intelligence was shared with ITSE, and our recommendations enabled them to consider any enhancements/changes to the programmes/subjects.

2. Development of a detailed instructors' guide for years 1 and 2

For each subject within the 17 programmes, we developed a comprehensive instructors' guide that looks at performance criteria and competencies. Acting as a scheme of work, it identifies what needs to happen week-by-week to cover these areas, both in terms of practical activities and technical knowledge, as well as how it will be assessed.

Panama

“ ITSE prepares you for work because of the practical activities and the different teaching methods we receive compared to the usual typical university courses that are all theory. We will finish our course and be able to go straight into the workplace with all the necessary skills and attitudes. The course is only 2 years rather than 4 years, which makes it much more accessible to us. We are honoured and privileged to be here and we tell all our friends that they must enrol to be part of this unique learning experience that is so different to anything else here in Panama. ITSE is a second family and we love coming here to learn and the instructors are all so supportive.”

ITSE Student Year 1

3. Development of a student guide for years 1 and 2

Alongside the detailed instructors' guide, the student guide presented the scheme of work from a learner's perspective, outlining what they will be covering, the course content and how they will be assessed.

4. Instructor training

Our final stage was to deliver two weeks of instructor training. This train-the-trainer style programme offered intensive support to the instructors in utilising the programme specific instructor guides and prepared them for developing programme work plans, engaging and effective lesson plans, and high-quality student material. Instructors were also given an overview on preparing their students for assessment and tracking learner progress.

Outcomes & Impact

There are now 47 new specialist trainers for the ITSE who have completed the bespoke train the trainer programme, have access to a range of high-quality instructor support materials and are approved to deliver at the new state-of-the-art training facility. As a result, the ITSE was able to open as planned in April 2019.

Our expertise delivered four key benefits:



- **UK industry expertise in TVET curriculum design and delivery:** Having worked extensively across the UK and internationally on the design, development and implementation of vocational training models and learning methodologies that are inclusive and fit for purpose, our input and management provided critical support to the 47 new ITSE instructors. Our expertise, support and guidance was crucial in developing a consistently high standard of instructors armed with the skills they need to develop and deliver effective curriculum.



- **Tried and tested models and programmes of delivery:** Having delivered large-scale projects to design and develop professional industry standards, written curriculum to meet these standards and run a range of train-the-trainer programmes, our established models, programmes and approaches provided significant benefit to the ITSE. At the heart of our implementation was flexibility. Our approach enabled us to adapt each aspect of the programme to meet the requirements of the ITSE.



- **Consistent quality, look and feel, branding of programmes:** In managing our diverse sector and curriculum experts, with over 300 subjects to design and develop curriculum for, this meant a level of standardisation was critical. Using our specialist knowledge, we created an acceptance criteria that met ITSE's requirements to ensure consistency across the way the programmes were written, formatted and branded.



- **Support to new ITSE curriculum team:** The new instructors for ITSE were recruited as specialists from their respective industries, meaning they brought with them valuable industry knowledge and experience, but in some cases, limited training skills. In working with them to provide the skills needed to develop and deliver effective curriculum, we also enriched their capabilities in teaching and the disciplines of assessment and quality assurance.

About People 1st International

People 1st International is an employer-led skills and quality assurance expert.

We develop and quality assure industry relevant skills solutions in the UK and internationally across apprenticeships, work-based learning and technical vocational education, as well as providing a consultancy service internationally to support countries in developing sustainable skills models.

Our employer-led approach gives us an unparalleled insight into the skills priorities now and in the future, with critical industry partnership collaborations that bridge the gap between employers and government.

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