Towards a New Global World of Skills Development?

TVET’s Turn to Make its Mark

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NORRAG NEWS is supported by the UK’s Department for International Development (DFID), whilst the Coordination of NORRAG, and the translation of NORRAG NEWS into French and Spanish is supported by Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC). Dissemination of NORRAG NEWS to key meetings is handled by the Netherlands Organisation for International Cooperation in Higher Education (NUFFIC). None of these, of course, is responsible for the content of NORRAG NEWS.

Free on website: www.norrag.org from September 2011

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What is NORRAG?

NORRAG (Network for Policy Research, Review and Advice on Education and Training) is a focus and a forum for the analysis of international cooperation in the education and training field.

The objectives of NORRAG are:

1. Collection, critical analysis, and synthesis of research on education and training policies and strategies, and on international cooperation;
2. Dissemination of just-in-time information and knowledge on education and training policies and strategies, and on international cooperation;
3. Advocacy of critical analysis on education and training policies and strategies to governments, NGOs and other organizations;
4. Cooperation with other networks in order to share information, carry out joint programmes, joint efforts in advocacy and strengthen networks.

The main instruments of NORRAG are its publications (NORRAG NEWS and Policy Briefs), its website and the organization of/and participation in meetings.

For more information, please visit: www.norrag.org

What is NORRAG NEWS?

NORRAG NEWS is a digital newsletter that is produced twice a year. Each issue has a large number of short, sharp articles, focusing on policy implications of research findings and/or on the practical implications of new policies on international education and training formulated by development agencies, foundations and NGOs. The niche of NORRAG has been to identify a number of ‘red threads’ running through the complexity of the debates and the current aid and cooperation discourse, and to dedicate special issues of NORRAG NEWS to the critical analysis of these themes.
The years 2011-2012 are finally TVET’s turn. The *Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report (GMR)* for 2012 is dedicated to skills development, the last of the 6 EFA Dakar Goals to be analysed in depth. Concurrently, UNESCO has decided these are the years in which to develop a *World TVET Report* which will be the main document at the Third International Congress on TVET, scheduled for Shanghai on 14-16 May 2012. NORRAG has also decided to mark 2011 with a special attention to skills development, and for this reason at the UKFIET biennial conference on Global Challenges for Education, in September 2011, it has organised with others a major section on Skills for Work in Changing Macro-economic Environments.

Both of the first items mentioned will cover a huge area of ground in their main texts and in commissioned thematic papers and case studies.

The *GRM 2012* will pay considerable attention, given its mandate for inclusion, to the expansion of skills development opportunities for marginalised groups; it will focus on the relationship between skills and employment, and it will certainly explore the concerns over learning and skills deficits both in richer, developed countries and poorer developing economies. The GMR intends to draw lessons about successful skills development programmes from both the traditional donor countries and the so-called emerging donors. They plan to revisit some of the policy challenges of skills training that have been around for fifty years, and yet the evidence base for answers to these remains elusive.

Equally, the *World TVET Report* has developed a very ambitious conceptual framework as its foundation. In brief, it will look back to what has changed in the world since the 2nd World Congress in Seoul of 1999, and how TVET has been affected by this wider environment; it will then review new approaches and reforms in the field of TVET itself through a series of nine different lenses from access and equity to accountability and sustainability; finally it will review TVET in relation to changes in international cooperation, including in the role of TVET in UNESCO’s own mandate.

Beyond these two global events, there is a major Pan-African event, the first Triennale of the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), which is dedicated this year to “Promoting critical knowledge and skills and qualifications for sustainable development in Africa”. This will be held in Burkina Faso in February 2012, and will focus a great deal of analysis on basic skills, job skills, work skills and technological skills in Africa.

NORRAG’s contribution to these global and regional processes of review and analysis has been to contribute seriously to the on-line debate on the outline of the EFA GMR 2012: [http://gmrconsultation.wordpress.com/2011/02/01/consultation-for-the-2012-gmr/](http://gmrconsultation.wordpress.com/2011/02/01/consultation-for-the-2012-gmr/)
NORRAG is also itself researching skills development. Thus, a study has been launched among three ERNWACA teams in Ghana, Burkina Faso and Ivory Coast and NORRAG on the state of and needs for research on skills development in these three countries. Further, as mentioned above, NORRAG has put on a skills section of the UKFIET Oxford Conference, which has challenged over 25 analysts to react to the following dimensions of Skills for Work in Changing Macro-economic Environments:

- What evidence is there of skills development contributing to poverty reduction, especially in informal sectors?
- Can new apprenticeship approaches, formal and informal, play a role?
- What linkages between youth, adult education and skills development are being promoted, and what can be learned from these second-chance opportunities?
- Is there a realistic prospect of rehabilitating public providers of skills development in poorer countries?
- What role can and should the private sector (both formal and informal) play in skills development and can this support social justice as well as economic efficiency?
- What learning worldwide can be taken from the vogue for national and regional qualification frameworks?
- What learning and life skills can be covered in EFA Dakar Goal 3?
- What is the ‘culture of skills’ in different country contexts?
- What role can various forms of international cooperation play in supporting skills development?
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Foreword, by Kenneth King, Editor of NORRAG NEWS

This is rather a special issue of NORRAG News, since about 20 of its 50 contributors have also written full-length papers on the same subjects. These are being delivered during the UKFIET Oxford International Conference on Educational Development during 13-15 September 2011. There is a whole series of sessions of the Conference organised under the theme: **Skills for work in changing macro-economic environments** at which these full papers will be presented and discussed. The full programme of the Conference within which this theme can be followed is available at:  

In addition, we found that this topic of skills development was very popular, and several people wrote from round the world offering to contribute.

**Rethinking Membership.** In the last issue of NN (45), we discussed NORRAG membership a good deal. We have to thank NORRAG’s Brainstorming Group for challenging us to think about our membership in all its diversity. We have, as a result, thought a lot about our constituencies, which in total are now over 3,400 members worldwide. We have recognised that all NORRAG members are readers of NORRAG NEWS. Of these, almost 1000 individuals have contributed to NN over the 25 years. Well over a hundred of these contributors have provided multiple copy to NN. They have proved themselves to be reliable writers for NN. Others again have been very proactive and have been keen to organise joint meetings with NORRAG. In the last year and a half alone (2010/2011), NORRAG partnered with UCT (Cape Town), OSSREA (Ethiopia), IAMR (India), ALAST (Mexico) SDC (Dhaka), COTVEC (Ghana), IHEID (Geneva), HKIEd/CERC (Hong Kong), Waseda/ICU/JICA (Japan), and IFAD (Rome). The NORRAG co-operators who promoted these joint activities have hopefully gained from the interaction. Finally, there have been members who have been proactive networkers. When a particular issue of NN has arrived they have taken the initiative and disseminated it round their networks. We recognise these different categories of NORRAG member, but we don't intend dividing the membership into Readers, Writers, Co-operators or Networkers; that could be divisive! But we shall continue to look to the membership for initiatives of all sorts, and especially ideas for joint activities such as those just mentioned.

**NORRAG & the Oxford Conference.** This year is the 20th anniversary of the Oxford Conference, and NORRAG has been responsible for some particular section of the Conference ever since it began. We have always had a NORRAG open meeting during the Conference, and we look forward to meeting many of the contributors to this special issue there, as well as interacting with many of our readers, writers, co-operators and networkers. Such face-to-face events are crucial to the vitality of virtual networks. Time: 8.00 on the 15th September, in New College, Oxford.

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Editorial: Now that TVET has the Floor – What is the Storyline? By Kenneth King, University of Edinburgh & NORRAG

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Within 12 months, there will be a further two global reports available, this time on TVET and skills development (see NN43: A World of Reports). The Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report (GMR) 2012 has said it will focus on skills development which might expand opportunities for marginalised groups. The World TVET Report which will be discussed at the Third International Congress on TVET in Shanghai on 14-16 May 2012 will doubtless look back to the Second Congress in Seoul in 1999, and reflect on what has remained crucial since then as well as what are new contexts and challenges in which TVET is expected to play some role (see Tang, this issue). The fact that the Third Congress is being located in a country that has become the ‘factory of the world’ is not insignificant. Equally, the EFA GMR 2012 outline has emphasised the importance of the emerging donors such as China and India, and has mentioned that: ‘It will look at the contributions being made by new donor countries, including those that have experienced significant economic growth themselves in recent years partly thanks to the attention they have paid to skills training.’

The last time we dedicated a special issue of NN to skills development was in the spring of 2007, NN38. Only 7 of the 37 contributors to NN37 have contributed this time, and they are joined by some 40 others, making this one of the larger special issues we have developed. This has of course been greatly helped by most of the paper-givers in the skills section of the UKFIET Oxford Conference of September 2011 also contributing to NN46. Despite this, there are as many donor- and/or government agency individuals contributing to this issue (18) as there are academics and researchers. The remaining contributors are from consultancy firms and from NGOs.

Because of this diversity, there is no single storyline being taken by this special issue. Nor is there a single line taken in any of our past 45 issues. But beyond the four main thematic sections of this issue, there are a number of generative themes that can be identified amongst several contributors.

Not a predominant aid-agency perspective on TVET

In the past, special issues of NORRAG News (NN) have focused from time to time on major reports such as the World Bank’s 1991 TVET policy paper, or the World Declaration on EFA in 1990. Doubtless there will be a special issue of NN (48) around May/June 2012 looking at the two major reports on skills, associated with the 3rd Congress and with the GMR 2012. In this issue, there are contributions from bilateral and multilateral agencies on several different dimensions of skills development, and it is clear from several other contributions that aid agencies are crucially involved in the support of TVET reform, but the sheer variety of TVET reform possibilities means that agencies in one country may not all be singing from the same hymnal. In other words, the Paris and Accra agendas for aid harmonisation are perhaps easier to find in respect of basic education than in skills development.
Beyond a labour market justification for TVET

Several of the papers in this issue look at TVET through a much broader lens than the labour market. In addition to any continuing concern with employment opportunities, TVET is acknowledged for its relevance to many other dimensions of human development, including creativity and design, art and craft. Skills development is certainly not only to do with technical or job-specific skills, but also with a whole range of generic skills and soft skills that are felt to be crucial to both work and leisure. TVET is often concerned with socialization and empowerment and not just with job preparation.

Beyond demand-led TVET?

Although TVET analysts remain keenly aware of the adage: ‘No demand; no training’, they continue to be conscious of the dilemma of contexts and economic environments where there is little or no labour market demand. But equally there is a serious need to question the notion of demand-led skills development. There are many distortions in patterns of employer demand, for example for casualisation and informalisation of skills, for fragmented skills rather than holistic expertise. Indeed it could be argued for many countries that it is precisely the employers’ demand for using casual labour and minimum on-the-job training that has made it so difficult to place more fully trained candidates. So the mantra of demand-led training needs itself to be carefully analysed in different kinds of enabling and disabling environments.

Tempting targets

Despite this, politicians continue to find skill targets extremely seductive. 2 million artisans by next year, or 5 million by 2015 sound like serious politics. In this genre none can be more ambitious than India’s plan to create 500 million skilled workers by its 75th anniversary of independence, 2022. What is often unclear in this politics of targets is who exactly the targets are! Are they already working, are they already semi-skilled, or are they new skilled?

Questioning ‘best practice’

Readers will recall the special issue on ‘best practice’ (NN39). In TVET too there is a good deal of what passes as best practice that still needs to be carefully interrogated. Here policy learning is a higher priority than policy copying. Some of these ‘best practices’ have become extremely popular, e.g. national vocational qualification frameworks, competency-based training, or demand-led training, just mentioned, but they still lack a rigorous evidence base.

Researching TVET

One of the consequences of the two global reports on TVET in early 2012 is that there will have been a large quantity of commissioned research associated with them. Certainly this will cover not only the ‘old chestnuts’ of TVET research, but also some of the new ‘low-hanging fruits’ of current TVET analysis. These new fruits might include analysis of public
private partnerships in TVET, the extraordinary diversity of secondary vocational education, world-wide, and the analysis of countries where school or institution-based TVET is of very high prestige as in Scandinavia. Hopefully also, there will be detailed accounts of what the so-called new donors are doing in support of TVET. There is really no mention of this in NN46, except in passing.

**The particularity of cultures and traditions of TVET**

Another of the messages to come out of this special issue of NN is that the cultures and traditions of TVET are hugely different at the country or even regional level. Thus, most of Latin America has its own ‘dual system’ of school-based technical education as well as institution-based training beyond schools. Informal apprenticeship is not very different from Francophone to Anglophone West Africa but both are light years away from ‘systems’ in Eastern and Southern Africa. The training on-the-job of casual labour to become skilled is very widespread across much of South Asia. Every commentator on TVET in South Africa makes the point that there are exceptional challenges to understanding skills development in that country. And so on.

The consequence of these diverse cultures and traditions of TVET for those framing global reports is quite challenging.

But I’m sure that the TVET community worldwide will be looking forward enormously to engaging with these two major reports of 2012.

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RETHINKING TVET AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT
TVET for a Changing World: Global Developments, Local Resonance, by Qian Tang,
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**Keywords:** Learning from Seoul; new challenges for Shanghai, 2012; TVET’s multiple locations; World Report on TVET

**Summary:** Youth unemployment, social exclusion and poverty have helped put TVET firmly on the agenda of governments around the world. This new prominence given to TVET must be matched with the resources and policies to ensure that TVET delivers, for the benefit of all.

After a period of neglect, technical and vocational education and training (TVET) is now firmly on the agenda of governments around the world. Youth unemployment, social exclusion and poverty have led many decision-makers to refocus their attention on providing skills development opportunities that respond to evolving social and economic demands. Far from being the weakest link in education systems, TVET is emerging as a cornerstone for the transformation of education and training. Indeed, the development of skills through TVET is now one of the most often-cited priorities by ministers of education in both developing and developed countries. In recent years UNESCO as a whole, and many countries, have adopted strategies for TVET.

Unfortunately, too many young people and adults continue to lack access to learning opportunities, cannot find decent work or have jobs that under-utilize their competencies. Many people are living in poverty and face huge challenges in accessing the skills needed for healthy and productive lives. It is clear that TVET must change to respond to these needs. The key issues discussed at the 1999 Second International Congress on TVET in Seoul – such as changing labour market demands, TVET throughout life, innovation, access, equity and governance – are still valid today. But we must now also address newly-identified issues that were hardly debated then, such as climate change, food security, economic crises and cultural diversity. The recent events in many Arab countries have demonstrated young people’s thirst for more social justice and equal opportunities in education, training and work.

Maximizing the contributions of TVET to social and economic development requires that we develop a more diverse conception of TVET, encompassing a multiplicity of purposes, providers, settings and learners. This means acknowledging that the formal, public TVET system is only one part of the full picture, and giving policy attention to the different places where skills development occurs – by making visible, appreciating and supporting TVET learning wherever it occurs, including in local communities and workplaces. At the same time, we must remember that, generally speaking, TVET by itself does not create jobs; it is therefore important that decision-makers also put in place the right policies and conditions to stimulate economic development.
Similarly, we need to establish new types of partnerships, networks and alliances between diverse stakeholders within and between countries, including not just North-South cooperation but also South-South and North-South-South cooperation. More regional and international dialogue will increase the opportunities for learning from each other and exchanging experiences.

These relationships should support innovative resourcing arrangements to ensure more efficient, equitable and sustainable TVET. Mixed financing models based on contributions from the public and private sectors as well as local stakeholders and civil society increase the funding base. Moreover, where employers benefit from the availability of skilled personnel, they can also share their expertise and offer access to relevant technologies, mentoring and work placement opportunities. Multilateral and bilateral partners, as well as non-governmental organizations, can complement these efforts at the country level.

In order to advance progress in these areas, UNESCO, as requested by many of its Member States, has developed a TVET Strategy for 2010-2015 that sets out three areas of action: the provision of policy advice, conceptual clarification and the improvement of monitoring, and acting as a clearinghouse to inform the global TVET debate. Together with the International Labour Organization, the World Bank, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the European Training Foundation, we also established the Inter-agency Group on Technical and Vocational Education and Training (IAG-TVET) in 2009. The Group, which has now been joined by regional development banks, is in the process of designing indicators for TVET and supporting the enhancement of national monitoring and evaluation capacities.

These topics and more will be central to the discussions at the Third International Congress on TVET, which UNESCO is convening from 14-16 May 2012 in Shanghai. The Congress will be a major opportunity to advance the global debate on the roles of TVET in social and economic development. It will also be an occasion to jointly examine the findings of the forthcoming World Report on TVET, which will focus on transforming and expanding learning opportunities. Furthermore, the 2012 Education for All Global Monitoring Report will have, as its main theme, skills development for marginalized young people.

TVET is surely one of the best investments a country can make, especially when it is made available equally to girls and boys, women and men. We must now match the new prominence given to TVET for development with the resources and policies to ensure that TVET delivers, for the benefit of all.

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unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001833/183317e.pdf

Skills for Development? Rethinking the Kind of Development we Want TVET to Support,
by Simon McGrath, University of Nottingham

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Keywords: TVET, development theory, human development.

Summary: TVET is based on an outmoded version of development and the current interest in its reform needs to be tied to a consideration of how it may be enriched by a consideration of new accounts of development that are more human-centred.

2012 could be labelled the “International Year of TVET”. UNESCO is launching two major reports on TVET- the latest Global Monitoring Report and a report on the state of TVET – with the latter being also the major input into the Third International Congress on TVET to be held in Shanghai in May. Multilateral, regional and national TVET strategies are also being developed by a range of other organisations.

For those of us, including many NORRAG members, who have critiqued the absence of skills from the Education for All agenda over the past 20 years, the renewed interest in TVET may be welcome. However, it is vital that these major opportunities to revisit TVET lead to a serious dialogue about the role that TVET can play in development. Crucially, this requires detailed consideration of what model of development TVET should be seeking to help deliver.

TVET currently sits firmly within the economic development paradigm. Even where it increasingly addresses poverty and equity, it tends to do so with a modernisation perspective – seen especially in drives to formalise the informal economy – that would not have looked out of place in the 1960s. Anderson (2009) argues that TVET is based on two strong assumptions:
- training leads to productivity, leads to growth (training for growth)
- skills lead to employability, lead to jobs (skills for work).

When it comes to TVET reform, moreover, there is an international tool kit (including national qualifications frameworks, quality assurance regimes, institutional autonomy, national governance structures) that draws heavily on Neoliberal assumptions and takes a new public management approach to public TVET reform.

I do not want to argue that the economic rationale for TVET is not important, but our global visions for development have moved on to be far broader, and it is important to ask whether TVET can be more than is allowed for in this narrow economic development approach (EDA).
2010 was both the twentieth anniversary of Jomtien and of the launch of the Human Development Report series. The past 20 years have seen the rise of a range of developmental approaches that seek to place humanity at the centre of thinking about development. Space does not allow for an exploration of the complexities of these approaches; so I will simply provide a very brief sketch of four strands in order to ask what they might imply for TVET:

- human rights
- human development and capabilities
- human security
- human flourishing.

The human rights based approach (HRBA) to development has largely been pioneered by lawyers and activists and focuses on idealised and universal notions of what people should have access to. In education, valuable work was done by Tomasevski in developing the 4As:

- availability of provision at the systemic level,
- access in practice,
- acceptability in terms of quality, process and content and
- adaptability to the needs of individuals and groups (Tomasevski 2001).

Each of these considerations can be applied specifically to TVET. First, we can examine whether there are policy frameworks in place that guarantee TVET access for all or for more people and whether there is any attempt to focus particularly on certain “target groups”. Second, we can question whether there are sufficient sites and modes of TVET learning practically available – i.e., within physical or financial reach – for those who want to access them (this includes formal and informal sector workplaces). Third, we can consider the ways that TVET could be increasingly accessible and of increasing quality. Fourth, we can address how to overturn exclusionary practices within TVET institutions and workplaces. Such exclusion happens through the overt and covert messages of who is welcome in the institution and which knowledges matter, and can be deeply institutionalised in the curriculum, timetable or facilities provided. We know too that workplaces can manifest similar problems and that access to traditional apprenticeship, for instance, is hugely shaped by matters of ethnicity, gender and caste.

The human development and capabilities approach (HDCA) builds from a view that individuals need the freedom to be able to choose their own developmental paths. HDCA has largely been applied in education to schooling. However, it is apparent that its focus on addressing individuals’ and communities’ broader developmental needs and aspirations offers a very different perspective from the top down formulations inherent in both the EDA and HRBA. From a HDCA perspective, it is likely that TVET could be expected to respond to a more expansive set of skills that reflect personal, family and community development concerns as well as narrow labour market ones. Moreover, the HDCA approach suggests a very different methodological lens for understanding TVET priorities. The EDA in particular is interested in macro data on rates of return or meso-level evaluation of institutional efficiency, but the HDCA approach draws us into seeing from the inside and hearing the voices of those who may be engaged with TVET at the micro level.
Human security was also promoted conceptually through the Human Development Reports. It draws on both the HRBA and HDCA but stresses the challenges caused by insecurities and seeks to encourage a focus on how these can be addressed through dialogue and targeted action. From a TVET perspective, this may lead to a particular stress on the role that TVET can play in promoting peace and dialogue but also environmental sustainability.

Human flourishing as it has recently been applied to development (it is a key concept of classical Greek philosophy) also draws heavily on these other attempts at humanised development. It stresses the need to consider social, cultural and environmental relationships. This particular form is based in a Christian understanding of human nature in which all humans are intrinsically creative and productive; all have the potential to contribute to our common good; all are relational, formed and fulfilled by a complex web of relationships; all are moral, with an ineradicable responsibility for one another; and that all have a vocation to cultivate the natural world conscientiously and sustainably. (Theos 2010: 12)

This account too adds to the richness of thinking what a broader vision of TVET might include. It could encourage a focus, for instance, on the moral dimension of TVET learning, which does not have to be a Christian one. Indeed, this resonates well with the broad sense of the value of skill as being morally grounded that can be found in the work of TVET philosophers such as Winch (2002).

Taken together, these accounts suggest that we need to consider TVET not just as an immediate contribution to the employability of young people or the increased productivity of adult workers. Rather, we need to see it as contributing to our richer understandings of what we mean by development. In part, this requires a radical reconstruction of who “we” are – away from experts and policymakers and towards learners and communities that should be reflected in research as well as in practice. Whilst, in keeping with the capabilities tradition, it is important to allow for local definitions of what TVET should encompass to emerge through processes of reasoned dialogue, it can be surmised that these may move beyond a narrow economism to include considerations of the wider value of TVET for wider well-being and flourishing.

Of course, given the low status and poor investment in TVET internationally, this may seem romantic and over-ambitious. However, that needs to be tested and it is not acceptable without debate that our notion of TVET’s role in development is so out of step with wider thinking about development. 2012 offers a chance to decide what TVET should be for and who should have a voice in determining this.

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Skill Development Initiatives: Private-Public Partnership and Private Initiatives in India, by Santosh Mehrotra, Institute for Applied Manpower Research, New Delhi

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Keywords: Upgrading ITIs via PPPs; private ITIs; private skill development companies; National Vocational Education Qualification Framework

Summary: This note focuses on government efforts to promote skill through the private sector and through private public partnerships (PPPs).

There are essentially four initiatives taken by the Government of India since 2007 to encourage skill up-gradation by using the instrument of Private-Public Partnership (PPP) and, in addition, encouragement to private sector initiatives to up-grade skills:

1. Of the 1896 government-run Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs), in all of them the Ministry of Labour decided to introduce a PPP-based model of reform in 2007.
2. About 2000 privately owned and managed industrial training centres, now called private ITIs, existed in 2007, the number of which has grown to 6498 in India by 2011.
3. The National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) is supporting the setting up of profit-making companies, since 2010, to promote skill up-gradation.
4. The Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) has proposed in the country a National Vocational Education Qualification Framework (NVEQF), to be promoted by the NSDC jointly with Government; this will rely heavily upon private sector industry involvement in the provision of vocational education and training.

This note deals briefly with each of these four efforts for skill up-gradation undertaken within the last three years by the Government of India.

PPP in government-run ITIs

Government-owned and managed ITIs (under the jurisdiction of the central government’s Ministry of Labour) have been the main instrument for children completing class 8 or 10 in school to obtain vocational training. ITIs offer courses lasting 1-4 years all across the country, though they tend to be concentrated in the more industrialized southern and western states of India. The 11th Five Year Plan, which for the first time had a whole chapter
devoted to skill development (Chapter 4, Vol. 1), essentially had two ways of promoting vocational training through the ITI system in India. First, 500 of the 1896 ITIs (in 2007) were chosen as Centers of Excellence, in which only one or two trades of the 10-15 that are normally offered, were selected for the purposes of promotion as Centers of Excellence on a PPP basis. Of the 500 Centres of Excellence (CoE) to be created in ITIs, 100 are being supported by the Government of India and 400 by the World Bank. Second, the remaining 1396 ITIs were not to give any special focus on any particular trade, but were to receive Central Government funding for improving the infrastructure for skill development across all trades. For both the Centres of Excellence as well as the remaining ITIs the PPP mode took the following forms: new Institutional Management Committees (IMCs). New Institutional Management Committees consisting of both the ITI Principal as well as private sector industrial representatives were to participate in managing the ITIs. The experience with IMCs in the last three years has left a lot to be desired, as was found in a nation-wide study of ITIs conducted by the Institute of Applied Manpower Research (IAMR) in 2010-11. “The role of IMC in the management of the CoEs did not appear to be very encouraging. Most of the CoEs surveyed during the study reported that in terms of starting new trades, up-gradation of new trades, placement support and training support, the role of IMCs was mostly either ‘good’ or ‘fair’ (on a 5-point scale, which went up to ’Excellent’ and ‘Very Good’). On the other hand, in providing financial support, its role was described as ‘poor’. The greatest problem faced by almost all the CoEs was the shortage of teachers.”

Private Industrial Training Institutes

In 2007 when the Government of India decided to initiate a Skill Development Initiative there were just under 2000 private ITIs in the country. However, in the wake of the Government’s focus on skill development in the 11th Five Year Plan, there took place a rapid increase in the number of private ITIs to nearly 6498 within three years. While this quantitative expansion of vocational training providers (VTPs) increased the availability of facilities for skill up-gradation in the country, the quality of training being imparted by these thousands of new VTPs could be open to question. The number of trades offered by private ITIs, as we found in the recent IAMR study cited above, is usually under five; in contrast, government run ITIs offer anywhere between 10-15 trades in their programmes. The private ITIs are also not professionally managed nor regulated well by government.

The Private Partners of NSDC

As part of the Government of India’s Skill Development Initiative (which started in 2007 with the 11th Five Year Plan), three institutions were created: the Prime Minister’s Skill Development Advisory Council, the National Skill Development Coordination Board (chaired by the Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission), and the PPP-based National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC). The NSDC is jointly funded by the private sector, and the Government of India (51% private equity owned mainly by Confederation of Indian Industry, Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Association of Chambers of Commerce, and 49% equity owned by the Ministry of Finance).
The NSDC is the operational arm of the 3-tier management structure of the government’s Skill Development Initiative. Since the second quarter of 2010, when NSDC acquired a Chief Executive Officer (CEO), NSDC has been rapidly supporting the creation of companies that are providing vocational training all across the country, on a profitable basis. The business model is as follows: NSDC finances the company start-ups through a combination of debt and equity, the debt part of which is to be re-paid by the business venture-cum-VTP over a number of years by providing vocational training to youth on a fee-paying basis. As many as 26 companies have started providing such training, all of which are required by agreement with NSDC to ensure 70% of their trainees get placed in industry.

**National Vocational Education Qualification Framework (NVEQF) and the private sector**

The Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) has since late 2010 been engaged in an exercise to widen the scope of vocational education in government schools and the higher education system. Two specific initiatives of MHRD in this regard are notable: one, the vocational education provided to higher secondary school students run by the government is to be expanded by increased plan funding for the vocational education stream, which has been available in higher secondary schools since 1986. Second, the MHRD created an expert group in early 2011 to prepare a blue print radically transforming vocational education in the secondary and higher secondary school system of India to be called the NVEQF. The NVEQF has already been agreed too, in principle, by State Education Ministers in June, 2011. The NVEQF is now in the process of being piloted in Haryana State. It involves the extension of vocational education to secondary level (classes 9-10), in addition to higher secondary level in government schools (classes 11-12). In addition, it involves the creation of National Occupation Standards by the private sector by Sector Skill Councils (to be created by NSDC), so that in the entire country all vocational stream students in secondary and higher secondary education, as well as in polytechnics and engineering colleges, will be trained by using common curriculum across the country, which will be based on these National Occupation Standards (NOSs). These NOSs must be accompanied by a competency-based curriculum which has to be developed by private sector industry, in collaboration with, at the central level, the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), and at the state level the State Directorates of Technical Education. Moreover, certification for these courses and trades offered in the vocational stream of schools, polytechnics and engineering colleges, will all be jointly done by government and the private sector, so that youth can then be easily employed by industry. In other words, there has already begun a process which will lead to an expansion of training along these lines, which will gather the momentum over the years.

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**Skills for the Young Majority**, by Mtinkheni Gondwe and Ad Boeren, Nuffic, The Hague

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**Keywords:** Youth; retention rates; completion rates; gender

**Summary:** Maximum effect in capacity building in Sub-Saharan Africa can be achieved by targeting skills development at the youth bulge, with conscious effort on involving girls and increasing education completion rates.

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**Youth bulge and development**

Ninety-eight percent of the countries with a low human development index are in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). The total population in this region in 2010 was 864 million, of which youth (<20 years old) comprised 54%. Half of these youth (49.6%) are female.

Considering that few youth in SSA complete their secondary education and that access to tertiary education in SSA is generally <10%, the secondary education level is the most critical level for skills development. This is the level at which the majority of youth can quickly be introduced to a trade before their premature exit out of the education system.

The labour market consequence of the low secondary education completion rates and low tertiary enrolment rates is that a large percentage of the labour force in SSA does not have a high education attainment level. This has further consequences on the effectiveness, efficiency and productivity of the labour force and the economic output of their labour.

**Raise school completion rates**

We are convinced that the majority of students who attend school (both general and technical streams) ideally want to emerge from the system with a certificate of completion. Especially where the education was not free of charge and had to be paid for personally, we can expect that students and their parents will want a return on their investment. This therefore raises questions about the low completion rates for secondary school (e.g. 8% for Mozambique in 2010; 40% for Ghana in 2008). Why is it that students are leaving the system prematurely or without successful completion? Surely such a large number of students do not drop out or fail due to low academic capacities?

To gain insight into the possible factors causing this low completion rate, we interviewed various stakeholders in the education sector of Mozambique. Various possible factors were mentioned, among which is the timing of examinations. This factor usually gets little attention but may be an important one. The final year examination is the only determining factor for a student’s learning outcomes from a lower or upper secondary school cycle, whereby a cycle lasts 2-3 years. Although students are tested at the end of each study year comprising a cycle, the results of these tests are not taken into account when weighing the
learning outcomes during certification in the final year. When the main examination comes, many students have forgotten the material they learned in the first two years of the cycle. Yet they are tested on this material as well. Even if the students study hard for the final examination during their final year, they have an overwhelming task of going through three-years’ worth of study material in various subjects in one go and understanding or remembering it for the final examination.

This system is similar in many other SSA countries and very possibly contributes to the low pass rates on the continent. Students often exit the system without recognition for any of the learning they may have acquired. It is clear that this system of examination is not working for SSA and needs to be reviewed. A modular examination system which takes into the account the test results of students at the end of each school term or study year, in addition to the final year examination results, would perhaps produce better certification outcomes and pass rates. Students would probably be better able to cope with the short term examination deadlines since working towards short term goals is more appropriate for students in the secondary school age group. Additionally, issuing performance certification with each examination would serve as an incentive to stay in school and complete a given module. This would especially be useful to reduce the drop-out rate since students would see the relevance of staying in school and completing the learning modules.

Focus on lower secondary school

The timing of examinations is not the only factor reducing secondary school completion rates. And until many of these factors are tackled, the high drop-out rates in SSA will continue. Recognising this, education authorities in SSA should seriously consider increasing marketable skills training and modular performance certification in lower secondary school, which is the level at which the drop-out rate is highest. Currently, most TVET investments made by national governments, donors and the private sector are focussed on the upper secondary and tertiary education levels.

The decision to focus on skills development at the (lower) secondary school level would translate into increasing the share of TVET institutions to reach at least half the number of general secondary schools over the medium to long term. Currently, general secondary schools significantly outnumber their TVET counterparts in most of SSA.

Pay special attention to girls

The fact that females make up approximately half of the youth and of the total population in SSA, requires a conscious focus on the marketable skills development for girls too. Neglecting this is wasting potential, drastically reduces the economic effectiveness of the labour force, and slows down national development.

However, it is an illusion to expect equal participation in all subjects and disciplines by boys and girls. It is a universal fact that girls have other occupational interests than boys. Even in current TVET institutions, enrolment figures show that most of the girls are concentrated in the softer subjects (e.g. commercial subjects, administration and management subjects)
than in the technical and engineering disciplines. In the provision of TVET, this preference must be respected to serve those girls who genuinely wish to study these subjects, having based their decision on their personal interest and good, objective and sufficient information.

On the other hand, some girls make occupational choices based on what their friends and peers have chosen or based on the occupations they see women role models around them practising. For these girls, the bias must be broken and opportunities created (e.g. career guidance at school) so that they can think their choices through properly and make occupational choices beyond what they can imagine for themselves at that moment. Girls are as academically competent as boys. Their increased involvement in STEM fields (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) is crucial considering their numbers and the importance of the STEM fields in national development, innovativeness, and achieving self-reliance and global competitiveness.

To sum up

Too many youth in SSA are leaving secondary school without recognition of any of the learning they may have acquired during their time at school. The secondary school completion rate in the region is too low, resulting in a labour force that has a low education attainment level. This is an obstacle to economic development of the region. Various factors are responsible for this and need to be reviewed by authorities to address the situation.

- The first priority to giving SSA youth a chance in the labour market is to keep them in school and raise the completion rates. Even premature exit at any stage of the secondary school cycle needs to result in learning recognition through certificates. Modular education and examination would make this possible.

- Recognising that secondary school drop-out rates will remain high in the medium to long term, effective human resource development in SSA needs to focus on training of marketable skills, particularly for youth in lower secondary school. This education level is the most critical for reaching the majority of students since it is also the level at which the majority of youth are dropping out. Increasing the number of TVET institutions would be necessary to increase the number of students with access to vocational training.

- In the process of targeting youth in lower secondary school, special attention should also be paid to girls. They form half of the youth population and so their potential contribution to the labour market and national economy is high. Education and training in occupations that are appealing to girls should be offered, while also actively stimulating their interest for subjects that are traditionally not chosen by them.

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Capability as Well as Employability in TVET Approaches in Secondary Schools, by David Levesque, DFID, London

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Keywords: vocational education; effectiveness; value for money.

Summary: Not everything in vocational education can be directly measured in terms of economic growth. Let’s learn to value all the skills that vocational education can bring.

The debates around the effectiveness and efficiency of vocational and skills development in schools have a long history. Donors, particularly the World Bank and Germany, have invested heavily in vocational education in schools in developing countries but from Forster (1965) onwards a range of studies has concluded that it has not led to the assumed employment opportunities and been value for money. These arguments have been made in many papers including, I suspect, contributions to this edition of NORRAG.

However in many countries it is still seen as a priority, with particularly low income countries seeing it as one of the main ways of reducing unemployment. It has become particularly relevant as a result of the push towards ‘Education for All’ as countries struggle with the millions of partially educated primary school graduates with limited employment opportunities. It is not surprising that calls have increased for schools to teach skills that can be turned into livelihoods, for curricula to be revised and for donors to provide more resources to enable this to happen. Yet this has often resulted in supply-led, largely government programmes based on the assumption that teaching ‘vocational’ skills will lead to employment resulting in economic growth and development.

Yet perhaps there are benefits that are not sufficiently valued. Having taught vocation subjects in secondary schools in the UK, Kenya and Botswana, I can affirm that there are skills that are taught that are of considerable value that are not necessarily considered as contributory factors to employment and economic growth. These include the ability to envisage, design, plan, make and evaluate. The satisfaction of creating. The confidence which comes with making something practical that is seldom found in theoretical exercises in other parts of the curriculum; this can often feed into increased confidence in learning other skills. The ability to translate thoughts and knowledge into practical outcomes. The ability to use skills for everyday living including basic housing and furnishing needs. The ability to be an informed consumer. Inclusive skills for all, rather than the elitist skills often seen as necessary for economic growth. As well as contributing towards the skills that employers say they particularly value such as communication, team working and problem solving, these are useful capabilities and core developmental skills that have value apart from direct employment and economic growth.

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1 Writing in a private capacity, views expressed should not be attributed to DFID.
Perhaps we can conclude that what we value may be different; for donor countries that need to measure value for money for accountability, based on the assumption that economic growth leads to development; for partner governments who may well be seeking to reduce youth unemployment for political reasons and for the individuals who seek the opportunity to acquire skills that will be of benefit throughout their lives.

Maybe those who provide the finance and policies which support these programmes need to acknowledge that benefits cannot always be categorised in terms of unit costs, numbers of people in work or impact on economic growth.

Let’s not just value the things that are easy to measure.

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**Capability or Employability? Rethinking the Role of VET Within a Capabilities Framework,**

by Lesley Powell, University of Nottingham, Nottingham

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**Keywords:** Capabilities approach; capability approach; Vocational Education and Training; TVET

**Summary:** The capability approach challenges the dominance of neoliberal conceptions that emphasize economic rationales for human resource development and employability as the foremost purpose of education and training. By recognising work, as only one aspect – albeit an important aspect – of human life and human wellbeing, it provides a strong argument for a conceptualising the contribution of VET more broadly than that provided by employability.

The capabilities approach has a significant contribution to make to our conceptualisation of vocational education and training (VET). Its value lies in its commitments to social justice, human wellbeing, freedom, development and human agency and in its practical emphasis on what people are actually able to do and be. Developed by economist, Amartya Sen, and further developed by philosopher, Martha Nussbaum, the capabilities approach provides a comprehensive framework for conceptualising the quality of life and wellbeing of individuals with the central commitment being the dignity of each person.
In opposition to neoliberalism, it extends notions of development from that of economic growth and income generation to a notion of freedom which extends beyond income generation to include political participation, social engagement and the freedom to reflexively choose how to live one’s life. Development in the capability approach is about expanding the opportunities that people have for living a life of value and removing substantial unfreedoms which limit “what a person is able to do or be” (Sen, 2005: p.153). In this broader notion of development, growth in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) represents the means rather than the end of developmental goals which, according to Sen (1999), should focus on the expansion of human freedom. History has shown that an increase in GDP – and particularly in the absence of associated social and political programmes – does not in and of itself alleviate poverty or improve human lives as income and wealth are unequally distributed across societies and unevenly allocated within families (Dreze and Sen, 1995; Sen, 1989).

Shifting the focus from economic production and economic growth to a focus on human wellbeing suggests a broader role for VET to that depicted in education and training policy where education and training are expected to contribute to provide the skills and aptitudes required for economic growth and simultaneously to contribute to social justice by increasing participation in programmes targeted at employability. In contrast to these human capital and employability approaches which emphasize the working life of individuals, the capability approach emphasizes human capability, the opportunities that individuals have for agency and choice. A connection exists between human capital and human capability in that human capital focuses on the agency of human beings in relation to their ability to augment productive processes and human capability focuses on the agency of people to live the life that they have reason to valu. While the two approaches are intimately connected, as both refer to aspects of being human, human capital and employability refer to only those aspects utilized in production and as such exist as a narrower concept to human capabilities which include all aspects necessary for human fulfilment. As such, employability should be understood as a subset – an important subset, but only one subset – within the broader notion of human capabilities.

This locks into an old and rather resilient debate on what constitutes the good in VET with liberal educators arguing for the intrinsic aims of personal development and self-fulfillment and vocational educators arguing for education which focuses on the instrumental goal of preparing students for the world of work (Lewis, 1994). In terms of this debate, supporters of liberal education would argue that “it creates ‘general human capital’ which is portable across continents and work contexts” (Oketch, 2007: p.221). Supporters of vocational education, on the other hand, have argued that vocational education creates ‘specific human capital’ which prepares workers to competently handle specific job functions. The divide between liberal and vocational education has been rather starkly presented here to highlight the extreme poles of the debate. This is in contrast to recent thought which stresses the mutuality of the two forms of education and argues that liberal education and vocational components exist along a continuum with a shift away from facilitating job-entry to one that enables “vocational-specific skills over a lifetime” (Oketch, 2007: p.220) – that is, the individual’s employability.
The focus in the capability approach of marrying intrinsic, instrumental and transformative goals in education in a manner that expands the capabilities set of students, not simply the skills and competencies, is an important one for VET. While the expansion of capabilities certainly includes what Bonvin and Galster (2010) describe as ‘the capability for work’, the “bettering of a human life does not have to be justified by showing that a person with a better life is also a better producer” (Dreze and Sen, 1995: p.184).

Walker (2008), speaking of the value of the capabilities approach for higher education, indicates that “these are attractive ideas”, but what are the implications for the practical and everyday functioning of education. The capabilities approach is similarly attractive for VET, if not more so than for higher education, as it challenges through its commitment to human wellbeing the dominance of neoliberal conceptions that emphasize economic rationales as the foremost purpose of education and training. But what are the implications for the practical functioning of VET?

During interviews undertaken with 20 South African Further Education and Training (FET) college students and graduates, participants described the personal gains of attending the FET college. While students spoke of the skills and attitudes that prepare them for work, they spoke longer and with greater passion about the role played in enabling self-respect and respect by family and community members and about the hopes that it would enable respect in future workplaces. Further, many of the participants felt that their vision of the possibilities for their lives had expanded during their time at the college with the institution encouraging this ‘capability to aspire’. The majority (70%) of the participants were hoping to study further either full-time after graduating from the college, or part-time while working. Some of the graduates were already enrolled at higher education institutions or undertaking further study at the college. For VET to suit the needs of these students clear (and visible) progression paths into higher education have to exist and education needs to ensure that the respect, so important to students, is emphasised in the pedagogy of teaching and learning.

The capabilities approach, supported by these empirical findings, hints at a broader role for VET which includes the instrumental importance of developing basic literacy and numeracy and providing the knowledge and skills necessary for economic opportunities, but also includes the intrinsic value of education as an achievement in its own right for human fulfillment and the empowerment and distributive importance that it plays in enabling individuals to engage in debate, organise politically and resist oppression. This is not to neglect or ignore the importance of employment in poverty alleviation, but it is to stress the limitations of making employability and income generation the singular goal of development strategies and, thereby, the sole priority for VET systems and, also the limitations for poverty alleviation and human development of doing so.

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What are Skills? Reflections on Policy in South Africa in the Context of International Debates, by Stephanie Allais, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

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Keywords: South Africa, skills policies, vocational education, education policy, education and the labour market, varieties of capitalism.

Summary: This paper argues that two underlying factors which have led to difficulties with skills development in South Africa are the National Qualifications Framework, which has trapped skills policies in a narrow notion of skills as tasks, and a social welfare system that ignores the reality of high unemployment, extreme job insecurity, and low wages.

This paper reflects on South Africa’s ‘skills’ policies since the transition to democracy in 1994 in the context of two bodies of international literature. The first explores how the notion of ‘skilled’ labour is shaped by the nature of the labour market, how different qualifications are produced, understood, and valued, and how they correspond with different occupational divisions of labour. I draw on European research which distinguishes between vocational education and training systems focused on education for an occupation, and systems aimed at enabling individuals to achieve ‘employability’ through a market of qualifications. South Africa, I argue, can be located in the latter approach. Specifically, we have followed the UK model of using qualification reform to regulate the ‘market of qualifications’, through the creation of a National Qualifications Framework relying on employer specifications of competencies to ensure ‘relevance’. Underpinning this is a labour market characterized by extremely high unemployment, job insecurity, casualization, out-sourcing, and extremely low wages. These two factors have reinforced a narrow and atomized notion of skills as tasks for fragmented jobs, as contrasted with the systematic knowledge combined with operational experience and ability of technical occupations, and the defined knowledge base, controlled entry, and higher qualifications of the professions. I argue that while this type of policy seeks to create what it calls a ‘demand-led’ system, it is focused on employers’ short-term labour market needs, rather than long term educational needs of young people or long-term needs of the economy. I also argue that the ensuing qualification model has been cumbersome and difficult to use, because of the tendency of competency-based systems to lead to narrow but lengthy and overspecified qualification documentation, which has made the work of government institutions as well as providers difficult, and, ironically, has made it harder for providers to be responsive to employers’ needs.

The second body of literature that I consider is that on ‘varieties of capitalism’, which attempts to understand and compare the institutional basis of different production systems in the advanced economies. Specifically, I draw on a model which distinguishes three worlds of skill formation, each reflective of a particular underlying class coalition and political–economic institutional structure. This model suggests that social equality fosters the development of high levels of both general and specific skills, especially at the bottom end
of the skill distribution, which in turn reinforces social equality. Specific and general skills at the bottom of the distribution are strongly linked to employment protection and unemployment replacement rates. General skills at this level are also strongly related to active labour market policy spending and day care spending, as well as to vocational education. I argue that despite the dominant view in the South African media that our economic woes are due to ‘skills shortage’ coupled with an inflexible labour market, the inadequacy of our social security system and the high levels of job insecurity make it almost impossible to develop robust and coherent skills development. Instead, vocational education and skills development policies are co-opted and trapped in a paradigm of ‘self-help’, ‘employability’, and labour market flexibility that works against the possibility of achieving improved levels of education and skills.

What are the implications of this for strengthening vocational education and skills development in South Africa? We are not going to have either regulated occupational labour markets or universal social welfare in the short term. Nonetheless, improved social policy, located in an expanded notion of citizenship and welfare provision, could be a starting point. Another starting point should be strengthening curricula and the knowledge base of vocational and occupational qualifications—the neglected ‘education’ side of vocational education. This should include developing a much better understanding of how to assist students to acquire this knowledge, a difficult area in the context of the weaknesses of the South African school system. These factors are not ‘nice-to-haves’, on top of a well-functioning vocational education and skills development system. They are part of what would make such a system work.

Towards a Taxonomy for Skills, by Kate Shoesmith, City & Guilds Centre for Skills Development

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Keywords: Taxonomy; Cognitive and non cognitive skills; Technical skills

Summary: This paper argues that a broader basis for defining ‘skills’ is necessary to not only improve understanding and status but also to improve the quality of TVET.

Defining the term ‘skills’ seems both easy and a challenge. Sometimes, ‘skills’ is taken to have a broad meaning and can encompass any and all of the following: basic skills, such as literacy and numeracy, life skills, employability skills, practical skills and technical skills. In more recent times, however, the term ‘skills’ has become synonymous with technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and this has created an assumption that skills from
TVET programmes only relate to technical skills, sometimes also referred to as ‘manual’ or ‘non-cognitive’ skills.

Some of the responsibility for how we explain the different types of skills goes back to the taxonomy developed by Benjamin Bloom et al in 1956 (Anderson 1994). Bloom suggested there were three educational domains: the cognitive, the affective and the psychomotor.

To conflate TVET as a process for developing psychomotor skills alone is to fundamentally misunderstand the nature of TVET. Like all branches of the education system, TVET is only successful when pedagogical approaches seek to develop the psychomotor, knowledge and attitudinal domains in concert. The purpose of Bloom’s taxonomy was to do exactly that – to bring the different domains together and demonstrate their connectivity. Unfortunately, however, there has been a fundamental misunderstanding in how to utilise the domains suggested by Bloom and by others subsequently.

Technical skills alone will not, in all probability, win individuals jobs or see them keep those jobs; moreover, they will not enable businesses and nations to meet their targets. A more holistic approach to understanding skills is therefore needed. Definitions of skills, and by association TVET, have been further complicated and confused because skills are often viewed as the answer to any number of social and economic problems.

Developing a taxonomy for skills that seeks to inform the question ‘what are we hoping to achieve through skills development?’ may go part of the way to increasing acceptance and understanding for the process of skills development in occupationally specific areas and TVET, and for the broader outcomes of TVET – skills of all kinds, not just technical or manual skills. Equally, having a clear rationale as to what TVET is seeking to achieve can assure and improve the quality of provision.

Given that TVET programmes should not be seen as developing technical skills in isolation, a new way of defining TVET is required. If a ‘taxonomy’ approach were to be used for skills, it would need to include all of the following components:

- **Basic skills** – the literacy and numeracy skills that are the foundation for developing all other skills.
- **Generic skills** - also known as interpersonal or life skills. Their broader relevance to daily life, not just to the workplace, is why they have been separated out from employability skills.
- **Employability skills** build on the generic skills and while they are specifically about helping individuals become and remain active participants of the labour market, they are transferable between sectors and occupations.
- **Finally, technical or job-specific skills** are defined as the skills needed to work in a particular industry or business. It is perfectly possible that one person may have more than one area of technical expertise.
Underpinning all these types of skills, teaching approaches need to consider how to instil the ability to learn *(learning to learn)* in students so they can continue to develop their skills over the course of their lifetime.

In many societies, the first step towards developing a skills system should be an attempt to understand the drivers behind skills development and the promotion of skills. In supporting these drivers, a more holistic approach, perhaps through a taxonomy for skills, can enhance the reputation of the TVET branch of the education system and may go some way towards breaking down the artificial distinctions between so-called vocational and academic routes. Most importantly, greater understanding for TVET and skills may also help improve the training provision so it better prepares individuals for the variety of challenges they will face in life and at work.

**Further information**


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**Using a Different Lens to Look at Technical Training**, by Enrique Pieck, Universidad Iberoamericana - Ciudad de México

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**Keywords**: technical training; TVET in developing countries; job-training.

**Summary**: The paper argues in favour of a perspective that rescues the nature of the local contexts when assessing the importance of technical training programs.

Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Mexico takes a variety of forms, ranging from non-formal programs to the inclusion of technical courses in junior- and senior-high-school education. The area we want to focus on here is technical training, which is mostly provided by government institutions, and comprises 43 specialist subjects such as computing, electrical installation and repair, dressmaking, secretarial studies, auto mechanics and electronics, taught in 546 training centers located in both rural and urban areas throughout Mexico. The technical courses offered last from 6 months to 2 years and typically have a practical emphasis (i.e. one of learning by doing), being taken by people of different ages, though most of the participants are young people between 15 and 25 years old.
How does one evaluate such programs and gauge their importance? In the context of globalization, evaluation has been affected by international norms and standards based on the prevailing rationalistic, utilitarian logic that places the stress on programs’ impact and efficiency. From this viewpoint, educational quality is conceptually linked to productivity - to the potential of education to achieve higher levels of productivity and insertion into the job market. Currently, people prefer to stress the acquisition and evaluation of competencies rather than place the emphasis on learning processes.

Using this yardstick, technical-training courses may be deemed to produce poor results in terms of their functional efficiency, the competencies that they engender, their low educational level, and the limited job-market access that they achieve. However, we believe that such courses should be analyzed and evaluated from another viewpoint that has more to do with the real circumstances in which they are run. We need to take the nature of the contexts into account, which perforce implies weighing the importance of local factors that inevitably have to do with relevance – i.e. with the extent to which the programs respond to the local environment, to local diversity and to the socio-cultural make-up of the people at whom they are aimed. In this case, we are mainly referring to impoverished regions of developing countries where there is scant educational coverage and often no job-training programs at all.

In our opinion, one may, from this viewpoint, argue in favor of technical training. While possibly agreeing with some of the doubts expressed about these programs - i.e. that they are speedy courses for the poor, that there are too many of them, that they are insufficiently focused, that they have little effect on productivity, produce little income, etc. - we believe that certain other factors need to be taken account in order to reach meaningful conclusions about their importance. Our arguments in this regard are based on information taken from two research projects carried out in recent months in various technical training centers in Mexico. The first of these projects set out to examine the reasons why impoverished young people take these courses and what they see in them, while the second one was aimed at looking at and giving an account of technical training’s meaningful experiences.

Some arguments in favor of such programs are as follows:

- The courses are, indeed, short and it is precisely this that many people like about them. Being short of money, many young people choose short training courses whereby they can learn a trade that will enable them to find work fast, as exemplified by the words of one young electronics student who said: “This really does enable you to get into the job market straight away.” Other people see rapid training as a way to get a short-term job (albeit a lowly one) so as to earn enough to go on studying, while such short courses are also seen as a good alternative to three years of senior-high-school education.
- In isolated, marginalized communities, this type of training provides effective job-market-insertion possibilities to an older population that has never had the chance to set foot in a school or received any technical courses within its community. We
are talking about women who take courses in dressmaking and hope to open a small dressmaking business, students who, after being given a short cosmetics course, decide to open a beauty parlor in a tiny corner of their house, men who study electronics and start doing small electrical jobs, etc.

- Many young people find out which vocation they want to pursue while participating in such training courses.
- This type of education constitutes a training option for young people who leave junior high school without any chance of continuing their studies, or who have no wish to go on to senior high-school.
- While the courses generally afford access to the lower echelons of the job market, in many cases this access forms a part of labyrinthine journeys towards development, where work and study interweave to produce training paths. Study follows work and work follows study, so that it is common to see young people who study in order to work, or young people who, after working for a time, feel the need for further training in order to gain access to better jobs. One should not underestimate these trajectories made up of training and work –i.e. trajectories of betterment- which arise from students’ participation in job-training programs that oftentimes make surprisingly useful contributions to their professional development. Such programs do not specifically adhere to productive and economic criteria, but are based on another logic that produces unexpected benefits for a sector of the population that sees them as a legitimate training option.
- People profit from these courses in many different ways: women join together to make clothes, young people repair computers or even go so far as to give the same courses to other members of their communities, people who took a course in confectionary sell cakes in their neighborhoods, young men set up car-repair or metal-working shops, and others immediately find a job so as to earn enough money to go on with their studies.
- These courses go beyond the mere learning of a trade or skill, also leading to socialization, empowerment, the motivation to set up micro-businesses, interest in going back to school, etc. These things are part of the hidden curriculum inherent in such programs and are generally overlooked at the moment of evaluating them.

Hence we believe that a local yardstick needs to be used when assessing the importance of such programs, offered in such contexts – a different perspective that implies rescuing the cultural heritage of the people involved and getting to know their outlooks and needs before dismissing the training courses provided to them based on external criteria and trying to impose rationalistic modes of thinking and doing. Indeed, the proliferation of homogenizing approaches and emphases hampers the understanding of inner processes and obscures other important socio-cultural factors -such as the meaning and importance that people in such contexts assign to the courses they receive and the part that the latter
play in their life strategies— which are inherent in the development of the projects in question.

We cannot end our comments without mentioning a series of factors that need to be considered if we are to enhance the quality of these job-training courses and make it more likely that they will have a greater influence: courses in isolated communities should be longer, institutional links need to be forged in order to extend training opportunities (i.e. jobs, credits and education), the curricula should be enriched, focusing should be a basic operating criterion of such courses, and they should be run more efficiently. Without a doubt, improved quality in this area of job training could lead to increased access to employment, to the creation of local economic and productive alternatives, to the development of more solid professional strategies, and to enhance the way in which low-income populations ultimately see and assign meaning to such courses. Indeed, these things are happening in some places and one can only imagine what might be achieved if more support were made available and more strategic training approaches were developed.

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Training the Poor in Times of Unemployment, by Claudio de Moura Castro, Positivo, Belo Horizonte, Brazil

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Keywords: Training; Few jobs

Summary: There is ample consensus that training does not create jobs. What to do then if no jobs are being created? Four sensible pieces of advice: 1. Better targeting of whatever training is offered. 2. Teach basic skills, instead of specific trades. 3. Make academic education more practical and relevant. 4. Teach for self-employment.

Amongst respected researchers, there is ample consensus that training does not create jobs. Therefore, if in a given environment, jobs are not being created, there are perplexing issues concerning what to do with existing training systems and what to offer to those who are not finding good jobs.

The best general advice one can give about training is the harsh rule: “no demand, no training”. If we prepare students for an occupation and the jobs are not there, something is wrong. Offering training under those conditions only leads to waste and frustration. What is the point of spending significant amounts of money to prepare people for jobs that do not exist? It is a poor expenditure of public money and disappoints those who build up expectation and just end up as unemployed – or underemployed as before.
When we look at the reality of poorer countries, it seems clear that good training is too expensive as a gimmick to remove youth from the streets during the training process, if it fails to help them to get jobs. There must be better uses for the resources.

However, does it mean that we should close down training programs and ignore the potential candidates for training, especially when they are poor, need jobs and cannot find them?

Below we suggest some promising lines to help break the dismal predicament of “no demand, no training”:

**Squeeze the job market and target the poor: The “Joven” [Youth] Projects**

Starting with Chile and followed by Argentina and other countries, the IDB funded a number of programs in which training was outsourced to any operator who could present a decent training program to the unemployed and a written promise of a job or an internship to those who graduated. Evaluations showed that the program gave a chance to thousands of small (sometimes improvised) training operators to roam the country in search of firms that would take their students. And this effort paid off because they found many dormant opportunities.

**Teaching basic skills woven into practical instruction**

Many low level workers know how to use their hands, but not their brains. Creative programs can use the contextualized environment of real job to teach basic cognitive skills. There are many successful examples of integration of job skills with basic skills in large corporations and the armed forces.

Typically, painters are taught the mathematics of calculating how many cans of paint they will need to paint a room. Carpenters are taught how to read blueprints or to prepare written reports. Plumbers can be taught accounting or costs. Repairmen can be taught how to read instruction or service manuals.

**Academic schools offering “practical” education**

In times of unemployment, keeping youth in school for a longer time can be a good idea. Education is less perishable than training. Training that is not put to good use right away risks being lost forever. By contrast, education being far more “generic”, can be expected to have a longer shelf-life. In addition, compared to serious training, school are inexpensive and they are everywhere.

Notwithstanding, we need to understand some basic facts about schools. We should not confuse the necessary interplay of theory and practice with the possibly, useful but not necessary interplay between theory and job-oriented subjects. Academic subjects do not have to be linked to vocational preparation in order to be effective. But in those cases, it is imperative that they be as applied to the real world and to practical activities as it is done in
serious vocational schools. There ought to be practical applications, explorations of the real world, experimentation and student research. These activities are meant to educate the mind via experiments and construction of real objects and processes – by contrast to the shops meant to teach a trade.

A good education blends theory and practice. Practice gives meaning and concreteness to theory and allows for a deeper understanding of concepts. There is no need to train for a given occupation to make education concrete.

Why do schools have to be so boring and removed from the everyday life of students? Why can’t the curricula of such schools be shorter, simpler and more focused on those academic skills that can be translated into practical skills? Notice that we are not at all suggesting that the schools teach “practical” skills or occupations. Our proposal is a far cry from teaching students how to grow cabbage in the school backyard because this is “useful” knowledge for the poor. As previously emphasized, we are stressing the practical side of the same academic skills (e.g. learning to use mathematics to deal with everyday problems).

**Training for self-employment**

Much has been written and done about the potential of training programs to prepare youth for self-employment. This is not the place to review such experiments and their results. However, it is worth mentioning as a serious alternative to train poor youth.

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**Economic Growth: A Great Challenge for TVET**, by Sara Encinas, SNV, Lima

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**Keywords:** Economic growth; training supply and labor demand; multiple skills

**Summary:** The article provides the major TVET challenges in a country with economic growth to achieve employment opportunities for low income population.

Between 2007 and 2008 Peru’s economic growth reached 9%. JP Morgan estimates that despite the US and European crisis, Peru could grow 5.5% in 2012. All the same, it has pointed out that “emerging economies will grow three times more than developed countries, although at lower rates than the ones forecast at the beginning of the year”. These statements are an opportunity to develop the skills of the less favored sectors, given that in the past years job creation “has been insufficient and uneven for it has not benefited everyone in the same way”.¹ One of the challenges that Peru must face is to have skilled human capital. Peru, like many other Latin American countries, can contribute to the world
economy but it is necessary to assess where the efforts are being made to train new workers and to identify the gaps.

*L’Association de Formation Professional de France* (L’AFPI), through a research, analyzes the world situation towards 2030. Currently, L’AFPI states that developed countries, contrary to the 70s, require more skilled workers and technicians as well as professionals in different careers. The trend towards the future is definitely a greater demand of skilled workers at different levels. That is, there is a growing demand to have some training level to get a job. On the other hand, the supply of workers that meet the market demands is still very low and in some cases, it is nil. This clearly shows a divorce between training supply and labor demand, which is not responding to the market reality, due to the dynamism of the economy and the lack of capacity of the governments and its educational systems to have strategies and policies that respond to the demands posed by the market at a global level. Both, formal and informal TVET training centers or programs lack articulation with the market. Therefore, there is no economic return, resulting in the economic exclusion of an important group of people that could contribute to development and move out from their poverty situation.

In this regard, we propose some suggestions to help overcome this reality: i) Analyze where the worker gap is, workers that could be potentially trained to become part of the economic development. This can be carried out through dialogue with the industry where demand has been identified. ii) The institutions that provide professional training or skills development must carry out an ongoing analysis of the economy and the market, both domestic and foreign, locally and worldwide. This implies modernizing their supply to achieve employability of trained people iii) Analysis must be prospective, 5 to 10 years ahead to identify if there is short, mid or long term demand. This will allow forecasting how many workers in a given industry will be needed and therefore, avoid over-supply of skilled workers who will later become unemployed or under employed. For example, in a fishing area in the north of Peru, the need for fish cutters was identified, but the recommendation was not to provide long term training due to the depredation of sea life and the global warming; therefore the jobs will be seasonal. v) Promote decentralized training programs, paying attention to their local economic potential. There are countries such as Peru which have a great diversity; this calls for a more rigorous analysis of the economy per department or region. What happens is that when a new product or service is promoted in a given area, there is not enough trained labor, therefore companies resort to workers from other areas, leaving the local workers out to the market, when this actually represents an opportunity for their inclusion in its value chain and therefore in the market. One example are hotels in touristic areas; export of flagship products such as grape, avocado, special coffees, cocoa, etc.; v) ongoing and diversified training to favor mobility of people in an ever changing labor market vi) develop and strengthen the soft skills that will be necessary in any dependent or independent job and which are highly demanded by businessmen worldwide.

The World Bank points out that in this century it is necessary to have multiple skills: cognitive, social and emotional, as well as technical and professional. In this regard, it is better to propose training programs that can develop different skills that will provide better job opportunities for workers. In this sense we recommend lifelong training to enable
workers to move into the labor market. Likewise a big challenge is to develop comprehensive programs for people with low educational background, especially for women to develop the necessary skills to achieve their social and economic inclusion.

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**Keywords:** Bangladesh; continuing education; social business; community empowerment; sustainable NFE

**Summary:** This piece summarises aspects of the work being done by the Association of Canadian Community Colleges in assisting the Bureau of Non-formal Education of the Government of Bangladesh to find ways to make community-based continuing education, and training for employment, more sustainable. The work is attempting to establish whether more effective, demand-driven skills for employment, community empowerment and prosperity, can be realised through the adoption of social enterprise principles.

In rural Bangladesh, even though there has been a significant increase in school enrolment and retention rates, there exists, especially in more rural areas, a dearth of appropriate skills development opportunities for wage and self employment.

Currently, the Curriculum Development and Program Implementation (CDPI) Project is engaged in primary research on sustainable and community-owned adult education and training provision for wage and self-employment. This research is suggesting that the establishment of a more vibrant, community-managed structure is needed, and one which could benefit by adopting social enterprise principles.

Before looking at the sort of structure being suggested it is useful to consider why, after many years of development activity at rural community level, the enabling environment for training for wage and self-employment opportunities is still very limited.

In many districts of Bangladesh, poverty remains stubbornly high and communities themselves appear to remain impotent and unable to do much about it. One hypothesis which might explain this impotence is that community ambition itself has been diluted by the very presence of the agencies which purport to enhance it.
Numerous agencies (mostly local NGOs) are providing various development interventions at community level but often these do not result in lasting improvements in livelihoods. Most interventions are still top down in design, short term, project-based, externally funded and hence unsustainable. They tend to have little linkage to the local economy and are disempowering rather than empowering. In essence, many communities have become dependents and peripheral recipients of support, as opposed to being central activists in creating it.

In addition, many NGOs are multi-faceted - engaging in numerous types of activity but often being true masters of none. This is especially so of those which engage in an ad-hoc manner in basic training for wage and self-employment. These agencies rarely have a solid grasp of labour market issues, have little facility to properly assess the market demand for wage employment, and have limited capacity to provide market-driven training and business development services for entrepreneurial learners.

Unless funded by the Government in some sort of public-private partnership arrangement, local NGOs must raise funding for themselves. The mechanism is usually through a mixture of project funding, grants and some sort of income generating activity. In the latter case the waters often become extremely muddy since the enterprise activity, usually funded through some initial donor grant, can actually undermine local business opportunities. In essence it represents the adoption of unfair competition. In other cases the NGOs act as clearing houses for products produced by ‘their’ communities. Instead of selecting and training community members in how to manage such businesses, and then assisting them to take off and act independently, the NGO retains a tight grip and retains its dominant position in a ‘parent company’ role.

Even when local NGOs talk about empowering communities, they tend not to have indicators of success to capture what they mean, or a specific target date on which to leave.

In trying to change this scenario for the better, the CDPI project is exploring the world of social enterprise and wishes to test the hypothesis that social enterprise principles can be used to empower communities and increase prosperity. But what, exactly, do we mean by this terminology?

Social Enterprise UK gives a nice definition of what social enterprises are:

Social enterprises are businesses trading for social and environmental purposes. Many commercial businesses would consider themselves to have social objectives, but social enterprises are distinctive because their social and/or environmental purpose is absolutely central to what they do - their profits are reinvested to sustain and further their mission for positive change.

(Source: http://www.socialenterprise.org.uk/pages/frequently-asked-questions.html)

So how can businesses having social purposes be grown as part of the process of creating more sustainable, community-based training for wage and self employment?
To answer this question the CDPI project team has carried out some primary research at community level, without the presence of any government or non-government representatives. This research has attempted to obtain accurate information about existing community networks and attitudes towards community-based basic education and training, managed along social business lines. Among other things the discussions included:

- Listing family connections to the wider world (including those of families who have migrated to other countries).
- The perceived willingness of community members, including more educated and wealthy members of families, both local and remote, to make a small financial investment in a social business which maintains and runs a permanent community centre within which a wide range of functions, including non-formal education and training, could take place.
- The availability of community members who would be willing and able to train to become centre managers, teachers of basic education, finance officers and small business development officers.
- The willingness of some of the investors to become trained to act as Board members to give oversight support and direction to the centre managers.
- The willingness of small business owners and local artisans to share their skills with other community members and to offer attachment training in exchange for technical and business development support.
- The willingness of local families to pay for market demanded training for waged and self-employment.

A pre-prepared focus group discussion questionnaire was used but community members were encouraged to extend the discussions to be as wide ranging as they felt appropriate.

To date, a total of four focus group discussions in different parts of the country have been held and in all cases a representative cross section of the community participated. The discussions were extremely vigorous and very positive and in no cases did the community members express a need for any external support apart from training and guidance.

On request from the Bureau of Non-formal Education (BNFE), the CDPI team is now working with a number of community representatives, and with representatives from the Government’s own Comprehensive Village Development Programme (CVDP), on the development of a pilot initiative. This will test both the receptivity and capacity of community members to become engaged in the management activities mentioned above, and the social business angle where community-linked investors will have their investment returned over a period of time but will not receive investment earnings - apart from the increased wealth and social capital that ought to accrue to their families and the community at large. The first pilot will be tested in an existing area where cooperative societies and the CVDP are already active.

[The views expressed in the article are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the position of the Association of Canadian Community Colleges.]
Vocational Education: Tangled Visions, by Krishna Kumar, Delhi University

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Keywords: attitudes to manual work; different discourses of Labour & HRD; National Curriculum Framework; patterns of recruitment to skills development; turf wars.

Summary: Skills development whether through schools or industrial training institutes continues to be affected by negative associations with manual work, and by the turf wars of two different administrations, Labour & Human Resource Development (HRD). The current reforms miss the point that most recruits to skills development come from poorer backgrounds and therefore need as holistic a curriculum as anyone else.

Vocational education has attracted successive generations of educational planners in India, but mainly for its potential to relieve higher education of its burden. Academic excellence being the focus of vision-building in higher education, planners have felt tantalized by a mechanism capable of siphoning brains from brawn during school itself. Not surprisingly, the idea that a substantial proportion of high school graduates could be lured into vocational courses at the higher secondary stage just did not work. The stigma that the caste system places on manual work, including skilled work, meant that no one—not even the sons of highly skilled craftsmen—wanted to join the vocational stream. A mid-1960s vision of siphoning off into the vocational stream as many as one fourth of the entrants to the higher secondary stage over the next two decades met with grand embarrassment in most of India’s 28 States. The small proportion of Grade 10+ students who end up taking vocational subjects do so because they are deemed to be unfit for science, commerce and even the arts streams. A still smaller proportion of the cohort are admitted to Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs). These constitute the other major educational vision of early planners of India’s economic development. Less than 2000 in the whole country, the ITIs are governed by the Ministry of Labour whereas higher secondary schools, including the ones which offer vocational courses after Grade 10, are under the Ministry of Human Resource Development. This distinction implies that the Directorates governing these two types of institutions in the States are governed by two different Ministries.

During the last part of my term as the director of NCERT (which comes under the Ministry of HRD), I was asked to head a sub-committee set up by the Planning Commission to prepare a vision for vocational education in the context of skill development. It was not easy to accommodate the two institutional structures described above in the new discourse of skill development. And there was yet another discourse to accommodate: NCERT’s own National Curriculum Framework (2005) which argues that pedagogic modernism calls for bridging the gap between academic and vocational learning.

The problems faced by ITIs and higher secondary schools with vocational options are remarkably similar. First, there is a great shortage of teachers and teacher training facilities. Vocational/technical teachers get far lower emoluments than what academic teachers get.
Second, the curriculum is mostly obsolete and narrowly defined, in that it seeks to impart skills without sufficient knowledge and often without adequate opportunity for hands on experience. The curriculum is also narrow in another sense, that it has little room for communication skills, knowledge related to health, safety and civic issues, and offers no awareness of gender issues. Vocational courses available for girls reinforce entrenched social stereotypes. Thirdly, linkage between learning and actual work sites is weak. Fourthly, opportunities for upgrading one’s learning a few years later or for enrolling in an academic programme do not exist.

A lot is expected to happen in vocational and technical education over the next few years under the new banner of skill development. A national qualification framework is being developed (by the HRD ministry). ITIs are being upgraded, multiplied (mostly in the private sector) and their relationship with industries strengthened. Partnership between public and private investors is being looked at with great expectations. What continues to be missing in current debates is the acknowledgement that those coming to vocational programmes are mostly from poorer backgrounds, that they need as holistic an education as anyone else. The other missing element is the awareness that the biggest challenge for this sector is in rural areas. The sub-committee I chaired has recommended that skill development ought to be a major goal of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA)-related activities (see Unni, this issue). One major sphere in which such linkage is needed is that of India’s traditional crafts. Like vocational and technical education, the crafts too have been a victim of tangled visions and turf wars.

Aid Effectiveness and the Role of Education and Training, by Tom Eats and Ross Hall, Edexcel, Pearson, London

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Keywords: Education; learning; sustainability; aid effectiveness; assessment

Summary: Education is a prerequisite to all sustainable development and assessment of learning should therefore be used as a measure of aid effectiveness.

At the time the UK coalition government came to power last year it did so under the cloud of the financial crisis which precipitated a series of cuts to government departments, but the budget for DFID was protected. As a consequence, that aid budget was agreed with much talk of aid effectiveness and eliciting value for money.

The purpose of development aid is often understood as aiming to achieve a lasting self-sustainability for recipient countries, and to eventually enable them to function
These infrastructure. That said, it often seems that aid agencies principally fund shorter term humanitarian support or infrastructure projects. For example, there are many tenders in road building, hospital construction and a range of electrical, water and sanitation infrastructure.

These types of projects are necessary and important, but the extent to which they provide long term solutions to development needs is debatable. Our thought is that the possibilities of education, and in particular vocational education, to act as fundamental building blocks towards development goals – and indeed as a measure of success – haven’t yet been fully appreciated.

While there has been heavy backing for education-specific projects – particularly in primary enrolment – aid agencies have tended to view education as an end in itself, rather than as a broader conduit for development. Our inclination is to put education in a central position so that it is embedded in all projects, with outcomes of aid activity being measured in terms of an increase in human capacity.

That would mean, in supplying a need for a new hospital, for example, agencies would be required to not only support the provision of the hospital itself but would also train people in every aspect of the work needed to operate the hospital effectively. So, rather than just employing people for manual labour, contractors would also be endowing the country with skills that they can continue to apply and develop.

This is essentially the extension of a thought process that suggests that applying education to every development challenge is the approach most likely to bear fruit in the long term.

However, training on its own will not provide shorter term evidence of value for money, or an evaluation of aid effectiveness that donor bodies seek. This is why we are suggesting that the provision of vocational assessment has a unique role to play, as by setting a common standard and assessing the quality of learning, it is possible to provide an effective measure of the increase in human capability. What clearer measure could there be of long term sustainability?

In building an assessment of learning for use as measure of aid effectiveness, we would envisage that any approach must be the outcome of a proper engagement between educational institutions, national governments, sector bodies and development organisations in such a way that the standard is widely understood, recognised and accepted.

Defining these standards - and measuring the quality of programs against these standards - strikes us as incredibly important work for the sector as a whole. By promulgating the value of relevant, high quality, benchmarked vocational learning we believe we can play a fundamental role in supporting countries achieve their long term ambitions.
What is the Difference Between a Skills Shortage and a Skills Gap? by Wes Schwalje, London School of Economics

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Keywords: skills gaps; skills shortages; skills deficiencies; pricing mechanism

Summary: With increasing attention on a growing “skills gap” in many countries, it is important to ensure that there is conceptual clarity surrounding the term. The term “skills gap” is often incorrectly used as a catchall term describing both quantitative shortages in external labor markets as well as qualitative skills deficiencies internal to the firm.

A multicountry, practice-based review of employer surveys reveals a distinction between skills deficiencies found in the external labor market (‘skills shortages’) and those applicable to a firm’s existing workforce (‘skills gaps’). Previous employer surveys conducted primarily in the UK define a skills shortage as an expressed difficulty in recruiting individuals from the external labor market under current market conditions with a particular skill set due a low number of applicants caused by least one of the following reasons: lack of required skills; lack of work experience a company demands; or lack of qualifications a company demands (Shah and Burke 2003; Paterson, Visser et al. 2008; Education Analytical Services 2010; Shury, Winterbotham et al. 2010). Because skills shortages apply to the external labor market while skills gaps apply internally to the firm, these survey approaches imply the two concepts of a skills shortage and a skills gap are separate and distinct phenomena.

The Inadequacy of the Pricing Mechanism in Solving Skills Deficiencies

The view that skills deficiencies are ephemeral and disappear as labor markets adjust is widely held. Underpinning this view is a belief that the pricing mechanism, exercised through expected wage returns and premia that motivate individual investment in particular types of skills and the ability of firms to increase extrinsic pay to obtain particular skills, leads to allocative efficiency within labor markets. However, persistent skills deficiencies over the last decade reported in several countries that began instituting national skills surveys in the early 2000s challenge the assumption that skill deficiencies are short lived and the effectiveness of the pricing mechanism in reducing the occurrence of deficiencies.

The cobweb theory explains how labor market adjustments related to professions requiring training that delays labor market entry might mitigate the effect of the pricing mechanism on skills supply and complicate reaching market equilibrium. Shifts in the underlying supply of and demand for skills require time to reestablish market equilibrium due to the lag in time it takes to develop particular skills. For example, in analyzing the markets for lawyers and engineers, Freeman finds that the duration of the training period to obtain particular labor market skills and accompanying lag in labor market entry due to the training period can result in cyclical shortage-surplus cycles in professional labor markets. Freeman
employs the cobweb model to show that supply of particular labor market skills is highly related to the economics of a profession, such as expected salary, and other forces that signal ongoing job opportunities and the state of the market such as R&D, output levels, and competition from others with similar skills. An important finding of Freeman’s model is that forces signaling professional opportunity and market health are more influential in motivating the supply of particular skillsets than salaries. Various factors are at play that signal increasing demand for a particular skillset, but the supply of individuals with those skills is delayed by the amount of time training to acquire a particular skills set takes. The time lag between the duration of the training period and labor market entry may potentially explain how labor market adjustment caused by adaptive expectations could potentially lead to endogenous cyclical cycles of skills shortages. While there is no similar theory regarding skills gaps, empirical studies also cast doubt on the pricing mechanism as a corrective measure to eliminate internal skills deficiencies. In skills surveys across a number of countries, firms consistently rank increasing pay or relying on the market mechanism amongst the least used measures to overcome skills gaps.

Given the questionable role of price adjustment in remedying immediate labor market skills deficiencies, such as skills gaps, ensuring conceptual clarity, understanding the causes and consequences, and considering potential solutions is critical. Rather than an ephemeral shock, skills gaps have been a persistent issue immune to corrective market forces that affect the workforce of firms in many countries.

**Related Work on Skills Development**


EDUCATING OUT OF POVERTY THROUGH TVET?
TVET and the Poor: the Promise and the Challenges, by Stephen Lamb, Centre for Research on Education Systems, University of Melbourne

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Keywords: Education for all; lifelong learning; poverty reduction; educational policy.

Summary: This piece examines briefly some of the prospects and challenges for TVET in helping promote lifelong education and meeting the needs of the most disadvantaged.

Increased reliance is being placed on technical and vocational education and training (TVET) to raise educational attainment levels and to improve the labour market and career outcomes of the poor. UNESCO, over time, has emphasised the important role TVET has to play in economic development and poverty reduction, particularly for the most disadvantaged. This view is based on the pivotal role that TVET has in creating a workforce of lifelong learners with the knowledge and skills needed to work with new technology in emerging careers. It is also based on the recognition that it has the capacity to provide those with very little schooling, the most disadvantaged, with the training and skills needed to take advantage of available labour market opportunities. Therefore, it has the potential to not only deliver higher numbers of skilled workers, but also to bridge the gaps between the poor and the wealthy, between those who have been excluded from the benefits of education and training in the past and those who have been more the traditional users or beneficiaries.

The potential for TVET as a democratising force, better able to serve the needs of the poor, is suggested in the role that TVET plays in some developed countries, but these systems also display the challenges and the limitations. One example is provided by Australia where the federal and state governments have established targets to halve the proportion of adult Australians without initial and intermediate-level qualifications, and halve the gap between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians in initial qualification (senior school certificate) attainment rates.

It is the poor including the indigenous who are mainly the subject of the targets, and the challenges for these groups are many because they have high levels of additional need (welfare and personal), low levels of achievement, weak literacy and numeracy skills, negative experiences of formal learning, lower aspirations, and the disadvantages associated with poverty. Without targeted and effective interventions, the funds to resource and support them, without widespread reform to improve the image and status of vocational education, and without attempts at improving the quality of delivery, it is not easy to see how current provision can deliver the expansion that is needed.

These are major challenges, yet, the potential exists for TVET to play the key role. The TVET system is already the primary source of education and training provision for a wide range of Australians, particularly for the poor. Early school leavers, people from lower socio-
economic backgrounds, those based in rural areas and those with disabilities make more use of opportunities in TVET than in other forms of education and training to enhance their labour market prospects. TVET is already more likely to contribute to the development of the job-related human capital and lifelong learning of the poor, particularly since the skills it promotes are more closely aligned with employers’ demands, labour market needs and current occupational practice. The TVET system, more directly responsive to industry requirements and labour market opportunities, provides one of the few avenues for many Australians to re-start their education and to obtain employment-oriented training. For disadvantaged groups, it is this which makes TVET both a source of dependence and a potential source of liberation.

So, to achieve the national targets it is TVET that will need to play the critical role as it is one of the most important program options in secondary schools for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, one of the few pathways for recovery available to those without any qualifications, and one of limited options available for adults needing to upgrade or acquire qualifications or to re-engage in study which for some may be after many years without any formal study. As such, it provides the main means for lifting attainment levels and bridging the gap between those with and those without qualifications.

But there are major challenges that need to be faced, such as overcoming the problem of status associated with TVET which is often viewed and treated as a relegation system for those who cannot cope with academic study, and high rates of non-completion associated with the nature of provision and the populations of users. There is also the issue of funding and the need for more resources and resource certainty, obstacles which threaten to limit future growth and potential.

A full version of this paper can be found in:
Are Latin American Countries Promoting “Light Vocationalisation” in General Secondary Education (GSE)? by Claudia Jacinto, IIEP, Buenos Aires

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Keywords: vocational training; secondary education; labour skills; Latin America.

Summary: Different initiatives in Latin America are aiming to provide a closer preparation to enter to the world of work in General Secondary Education. What are the tensions to provide at the same time general and specific labour skills as an addition to general education?

The direction of educational reforms in the 1990s in Latin America was to uphold that the uncertainty of the employment market and the need for equal opportunities required attention to be paid to providing a general education of quality and a broad range of common, transversal, skills. There was a consensus to emphasize general skills at least until the end of lower secondary education. Without questioning these views during the 2000s another debate emerged in this respect concerning: In what respects should general upper secondary education prepare people for employment beyond the general competencies?

The perspective was moving from the general towards the detailed. Several of the existing policies in countries in the region also recommend occupational competency training as part of the GSE programmes. Not only are general competencies highlighted in an undifferentiated way as was the case in the 1990s, but the development of ‘general and specific employment competencies’ is also being promoted in GSE. Thus the idea that training for work in secondary education only concerns technical schools is gradually being superseded, as has happened in some European systems.

The objective is to provide a closer preparation to enter to the world of work facing the critical views on the “excessive generalism” that is normally attributed to the GSE. This usually implies the incorporation of internships, entrepreneurship, educational and labour guidance and counseling to GSE, as well as linkages to vocational training. The following approaches are being taken:

a) Internships: Almost all countries of the region offer internships or practices (not only in private companies, but also in public entities, non-government organizations and social services offices) in the technical secondary level. But countries like Brazil and Colombia have also incorporated practices in GSE.

b) Generation of entrepreneurship skills: the students participate in a production or management experience in all their stages. For example, in Colombia, a national law for the Promotion of the Entrepreneurship Culture establishes projects of entrepreneurship in all levels of education.
c) Educational and labour guidance and counseling: aims to provide young people with tools to guide themselves regarding their educational and labour decisions. Chile for example, has financed education and labour guidance plans at schools.

d) Linkage to vocational training: linkages between schools and vocational training centers are promoted. The students attend the general programme in one shift and then in an extra-curricular shift, attend a vocational training center. Brazil and Colombia have included this perspective but there are experiences also in other countries like Argentina and Mexico.

One of the most lasting and consolidated experiences is taking place in Colombia, where since 2002, the coordination of secondary education with training for employment has received a new boost. In this context, the project introduced by the Ministry of Education, aimed to provide tenth- and eleventh-grade students in public and private institutions with the opportunity of obtaining general and specific occupational competencies through agreements between educational institutions and the business sector. This serves to promote the inclusion of this objective in the ‘institutional educational project’, through a number of activities. Emphasis on entrepreneurship and the provision of profitable educational practices is also included. In addition to training in general occupational competencies, the proposal also recommends the inclusion of specific occupational competencies for all students. In particular, the students’ requirements should be considered, aiming training at those students with a more defined professional vocation and those needing to find a job early on. The programmes should be recognized as equivalent to those offered under the National Training Service (SENA) in order to enhance double certification: the full secondary education certificate awarded by the school and the technical secondary certificate awarded by SENA or their authorized institutions.

The experience is not being implemented without debates. It is argued that the number of students is not really significant with regard to the total of secondary education students, since in 2010 the programme reached kist 6.6% of the school population between 12 and 17 years.

Some approaches criticize the unilateral or "vertical" idea of articulation with SENA, which does not provide spaces for participation to educational institutions and "that focuses teaching on training for work (and in some specific programs, like administration accounting) and neglects aspects such as socio-occupational guidance" (Gomez et al, 2009). It is also pointed out that the program depends on the installed capacity of the educational centers, limiting the articulation programs choice according to the previous offer of schools and also encouraging the excessive work teachers have to deal with without compensation.

So even in this lasting experience the risk of “light vocationalization”¹ is present and further follow ups are needed. Beyond the limitations of the implementation they are innovative experiences of double certification and preparation for the world of work in general secondary education, which is interesting to examine for its impact towards institutions and youth.

Education, Skills and Poverty Reduction: The Case of Pakistan, by Shehryar Janjua,
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Keywords: Skills development and poverty; informal training; Pakistan.

Summary: In spite of the strong emphasis on skills development for poverty reduction found in policy and planning texts, it is not clear how the Government of Pakistan plans to realise its ambitions in this direction. The relationship between skills development and poverty reduction is neither simple nor automatic, especially since an overwhelming majority of skilled individuals are found in the neglected informal skills and employment systems.

Analysis of various policy and planning texts of the Government of Pakistan reveals an overt emphasis on skills development for addressing issues of economic growth, competitiveness, employment and poverty reduction. Perhaps the most significant documents in this respect are Vision 2030 and the Medium Term Development Framework (MTDF) (2005-10). In particular, the MTDF envisions investments in the skills system to increase the number of training providers, establish autonomous skill development agencies at the provincial level, improve demand-responsiveness, and enhance enrollment to 1 million individuals per annum.

These targets, however, appear ambitious in light of the prevailing situation in the sector. According to an estimate from the National Vocational and Technical Education Commission, existing enrollment in all technical and vocational programmes stands at 315,000 across 1,647 institutes. Against this, the size of the labour force is 51.78 million, less than one percent of which have any form of technical or vocational education (GoP 2008). Likewise, less than 1.5 percent of secondary school leavers are enrolled in technical and vocational streams (GoP 2007).

In terms of access, formal institutes demand a minimum of middle school (eight years of education) for vocational courses, and matriculation (ten years of education) for technical programmes. In contrast, 44% of the workforce in Pakistan is illiterate, while only 30% have education of middle school or higher (GoP 2008). Direct and opportunity costs of such programmes further constrain access. Given the correlation between poverty and educational attainment, the poor are likely to be deprived of formal training opportunities.
The large gaps left by the formal training and employment systems are fulfilled by informal arrangements. In addition to employment in the informal sector, formal enterprises also rely heavily on informal, on-the-job training. While statistics for the wider informal economy are unavailable, the informal sector alone provides 73% of all employment outside of agriculture in Pakistan (Ibid).

However, research reveals that poverty is a discriminating factor even in informal settings. Opportunities for informal training are often accessed using social and family connections, which automatically puts the poorest of the poor at a disadvantage. There is also the issue of opportunity costs as entrants into the system are only provided nominal stipends during the period of training (between one to three years). Moreover, relatively high technology trades, such as electronic or automotive repair, require formal education up to the middle or matriculation levels.

Nonetheless, the fact remains that informal training and employment systems are generally more accessible to the poor. In fact, qualitative accounts indicate that most poor individuals, who are unable to complete schooling and obtain formal or public employment, view informal skill acquisition as an alternative. Informal skill acquisition is also associated with a sense of economic independence and security of income.

In this context, it is evident that any effective strategy for poverty reduction through skills development should focus on the informal sector. Enterprises in the informal sector are typically trapped in a cycle of low skills, low technology, low productivity and concomitantly low wages. Since informal training is typically on-the-job, such deficiencies spill over onto the process of skill training.

Market outcomes for informal enterprises are strongly influenced by environmental factors, primary among which is availability of startup capital. Informal enterprises are poorly linked to credit markets and most requisite capital is typically arranged from personal or family sources. Other significant factors identified during research include lack of access to retraining opportunities and business development services (such as business counseling, technology support, identification of high-value markets etc). Purchasing power in the local economy also plays a major role, especially for enterprises in the services sector.

References


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Skills Development: Does it Really Expand Opportunities for Marginalized Groups? by
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Keywords: marginalized youth; skill acquisition vs utilization; NGO traditions of skills for marginalized; government use of NGOs for skills in the new Mission mode.

Summary: Skills development for marginalized and underprivileged youth has been the forte of non-government organizations, and largely kept outside the government system. However, to fulfill the Prime Minister’s target of training 500 million youth by 2022, there have been efforts to engage with NGOs and reach marginalized groups. This paper reports the development in this regard and analyses the gaps in the system.

Skills development does expand opportunities for all who participate in it – the statement stands true also for the marginalized groups. However, the major difference lies in capacity of trained or skilled persons to utilize the skills learnt, which brings up the need of a different kind of packaging of skills training programs for marginalized youth. Experience shows that skill training for marginalized groups becomes effective and productive when considered as part of larger empowerment agenda; or linked with related livelihood skills. This may be in various forms, for example:

- Placement linked skills training
- Skills training as part of micro-enterprise development
- Skills training linked with micro-finance for self-employment
- Skilling self-help groups and supporting group enterprises
- Skill training as part of cluster development program, etc

Such programs require not just designing and delivering appropriate market relevant skills training, but require a larger focus on both backward and forward linkages.

- Backward linkage here refer to engagement with communities - mobilizing youth not only for identifying their training needs, but also for raising awareness among groups on skills training, counseling them, etc.
- Forward linkage would imply finding venues for employment, mobilizing support for self employment, linkages with financial schemes, marketing support & linkages, etc. – which is the package extended to the trained youth for supporting productive use of their skills.

The training offers of these NGO training providers are designed and delivered as per the broad need of the target group – their literacy level, the outcome expected, etc; as well as the capacities of the NGO.

The extent of engagement that NGOs are expected to deliver is explicit in the evaluation report of a project “Economic Empowerment through Strengthening Functional Vocational
Training on Viable Trades and Skills for Marginalized Communities in Eight States of India’ (2007-2009), which brought forward the following:

1. Left on their own, not many trained youth were able to find employment. They indulged in casual work and income generating activities, where they got only marginal increase in income, as compared to what they were earning as unskilled worker. Only selected few (probably those who were better networked), were able to move out and make their skills a success.
2. NGOs which worked closely with potential employer organizations and designed course curricula, delivered training as per the employers needs, were able to place almost 80-90% of trained youth in productive employment.
3. As most NGOs try to take training to the communities, the youth after completion of training are expected to move to the place of the job. This is challenging for the youth and they look on to the training institution for preparation and support.
4. In case of self-employment, success comes easy if the training provider extends regular support for linking for financing, marketing etc, and provides guidance from time-to-time for proper accounting, customer relationship, & similar aspects during the initial stage.
5. For women, the skills training gave them opportunity to engage in income generation – those who were not able to take regular employment, preferred working part time from home. Earning small income was not a problem, especially as they were happy to add to the family income. There were clear signs of socio-economic empowerment.

Due to the non-formal nature of the skills training extended to reach the marginalized youth & communities, these interventions had largely been outside the Government vocational training program. However, with the launch of the Prime Minister’s National Skills Mission of skilling 500 million youth by 2022, which translates into skilling all those who have dropped out of formal education system, it became necessary to include the marginalized youth in the Skilling Mission.

Accordingly, the Skills Development Initiatives of the Government of India have included a large focus on skilling marginalized and BPL (below poverty line) youth through the Ministry of Rural Development scheme – ‘Placement linked skills training program for marginalized youth’. The scheme targets skilling 10 million rural BPL youth by 2022. And to reach these youth, there was no better way than to utilize the existing institutional network from private, public and NGO sectors, by providing financial support for ‘skills training linked with placement’ program. The training providers are expected to identify market relevant training needs, design curricula, deliver training and place trained youth in jobs.

Most training providers have found the task comparatively easy, specially extending the skill training. However, the challenging part has been – firstly, mobilizing the youth from the defined target group and - secondly, placing the trained youth in jobs where they could earn more than the prescribed minimum wages in the state (this being one of the condition under the scheme).
The progress so far shows that NGOs like Don Bosco, Rural Livelihood Mission, etc., which have been working closely with community, have performed satisfactorily. The private skills training providers and the few government agencies find it rather taxing to mobilize marginalized youth from the rural and other BPL communities and get them for skills training. In one of the review meetings with MoRD, these organizations proposed that ‘placement’ level should be revised to 60% as against 75% as laid out in the scheme.

Approx 500,000 youth have since been trained; and 60% of these placed in various organizations – mostly in service sector. The employers, which are mostly the private sector organizations, are happy to employ these semi-skilled BPL youth at entry level salaries – tho’ sometimes the salaries are even lower than the minimum wages prescribed by the State Government.

There are major gaps in the programs administered, which need to be addressed for effective results. The most glaring one is that institutional capacities of the agencies participating in the program were not strengthened for improved skills training delivery. It has been a well known fact that NGO training providers suffer from limited capacities. Therefore:

1. The quality of skills training extended by them is very basic:
   a. Training is short term, skill specific and does not aim at improving the academic & vocational qualification as a whole. Hence, the exit level remains as – ‘making the person skilled enough to be placed in an entry level job’. MoRD programs are of 3 months – placement linked skills training; Modular Employable Schemes have 180 to 300 hours programs; it is not possible to make the youth competent in related competencies to be fit for job;
   b. NGOs are not known for their training management skills – they learn by doing; draw crude curricula and deliver training to the limited capacities of trainers. As the scheme includes no training framework, the quality of training under the scheme would depend on the capacities of the individual organization & trainer. There is no quality framework defined for these organizations – each one works their own way. MORD has also not specified any quality terms except for placement linkages, which is not always a quality issue.
   c. Curricula are not relevant to the market needs – lack of professionalism is evident in most of the group which is prepared for self-employment and income generating activities but the basic skills of marketing and accounting are not included in training packages. Components of ‘business skills’ are not integrated into vocational skills, leading to poor preparation of youth for entering the market
   d. Even the donor agencies like EU, Misereor, etc have not been able to extend quality controls on the NGOs they support for furthering the agenda of skills training.

2. The scheme focuses on entry-level pre-employment training of short duration. No options for further upgradation or training have been accommodated in the scheme. Hence, these marginalized youth have not been provided for future options of making a career out of the skill training. Institutional framework for further training and upgrading of skills is also lacking in the country
3. Though the training leads to placement, all trainees are not satisfied with income they earn and find strong need to either change their line of occupation or compensate the same with other activities – like farming.

4. Most importantly, at the larger policy level, these programs face a major threat as the level of income they generate is comparatively low – sometimes lower than the minimum wages in some states; and also lower than the compensation received under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act. Unless the skill training results in better financial returns, the sense of empowerment with vocational skills does not become a reality.

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**Vocational Education & Training for Women and Youth in Palestine: Poverty Reduction and Gender Equality under Occupation**, by Randa Hilal, OPTIMUM for Consultancy & Training, Ramallah, Occupied Palestinian Territories

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**Keywords:** Poverty; Vocational Education and Training (VET); marginalized; access; gender equality; Occupied Palestinian Territories (oPt)

**Summary:** VET has been a main contributor to employment and poverty reduction/prevention for Palestinians. Flexibility, targeting and ongoing monitoring have increased effectiveness of VET, yet spreading the effect of VET is challenged and recommendation to overcome challenges is presented.

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**Contribution of VET to employment amidst challenged context**

Various recent national studies and current conducted surveys have indicated that VET has contributed to employment of its graduates, amidst challenged contexts. Results of the studies have indicated 70% to 90% employment rates of graduates, and high labour force participation rates over 65%, although youth unemployment rates reached around 40% during the last decade, with low labour force participation rate (less than 30%), the lowest compared to regional and global statistics. Rates are reflecting the economic status in oPt challenged by the political status and military occupation measures such as the mobility restrictions of people and goods, lack of control over borders and resources and fragmentation of the oPt, in addition to other challenges as the high competition, the weak legal framework, size and structure of businesses and potential to grow.

VET has also contributed to women’s access to the labour market as national labour force participation rate is around 10-15% among the lowest in the world compared to over 60%
as various national surveys of VET graduates’ employment indicated. Employment rates are comparable to national numbers and still not as high as the male employment rates. Although self-employment rates for male and female graduates are higher than national numbers.

**VET providing access to the marginalized, the vulnerable and the poor**

Within the prolonged Palestinian political status, VET has been an effective way to provide skills for the thousands of refugees who had lost their land; moreover sending one of the sons to VET is seen by the poor as one of the strategies out of poverty, as studies indicated.

Various VET institutes have targeted the marginalized, the vulnerable and the poor, and have adapted their programs to provide training that leads to employment, through increasing effectiveness of training, linking it with the labour market and ongoing alignment of training based on market changes. Two institutes have conducted various models of training, including different types of apprenticeship training, outreach and training through production modes, while conducting ongoing review of programs, strategizing and alignment of programs and modes of training to meet market changes. Flexibility, management and ongoing monitoring of training in outcomes have contributed to increased employment of graduates of those institutes.

The current study has indicated that most of the graduates come from families with incomes below the poverty line, or with low income, with high number of family members and low achievement at schools. For those graduates, VET is a first choice not a second option, most indicated their expectation from training in finding employment or self-employment.

**VET contribution to poverty reduction**

The current study has indicated that employment of graduates has differed according to various variables as well as income of graduates; the findings revealed that 83% of graduates are contributing to their family income after graduation at different degrees. Findings also indicated that vocational training has contributed to poverty reduction and poverty prevention for 86% of the families, while enabling 5% of the graduates to start their own families. Nevertheless spreading the effects of VET in poverty reduction was limited due to multiple factors, including the challenged economy, lack of protection at the labour market, the attitude of the community towards VET, and the ineffective governance structure that could lead the change, added to the negative attitude of policy makers towards VET.

**Recommendations to overcome the challenges and increase VET effectiveness in poverty reduction:**
1. Enhancing effective management and governance for implementing ongoing monitoring of VET and enhancing of modes of training based on participation of stakeholders and right-holders.
2. Adopting different modes of training that could address different marginalized groups and would lead to employment, special attention and new modes which should address women to increase access to labour market and increase gender equality.

3. Documenting successful modes is of utmost importance for sharing of info and experience and most importantly to show the policy level that it works.

4. VET mainstreaming policies and strategies to support the poor are recommended to increase effectiveness of VET and awareness of policymakers, as well as monitoring implementation of national strategies, empowering graduates to call for their rights.

Training and Capacity-Building for Rural People – How to Define the Landscape? by Maria Hartl, International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Rome

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Keywords: agriculture and rural development; education; capacity development; technical and vocational skills development; agriculture, education and training; agricultural extension and advisory services.

Summary: Capacity-building, training, technical and vocational skills development represent an important investment for the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), a specialized UN agency and international financial institution. A recent review took stock of training and capacity-building initiatives in an effort to achieve greater clarity about types of training and capacity-building and to identify successful training approaches that empowered rural poor women and men.

The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), a specialized UN agency and international financial institution (IFI), mobilizes resources for agriculture and rural development. Capacity-building, training, technical and vocational skills development (TVSD) represent a large share of IFAD’s portfolio and are estimated at 35% of all activities. These activities are linked not only to agricultural production but also to off farm employment, income generating activities, marketing or financial services. They include a large number of approaches, from demonstrations, agricultural extension services, peer-to-peer learning, exchange visits, household mentoring to vocational training, apprenticeship programmes and work placements.

Recently IFAD undertook a qualitative analysis of training and capacity-building initiatives in order to obtain greater clarity about types of training and capacity-building in projects
supported and to identify successful training approaches that empowered rural poor women and men.

This analysis was triggered by a number of parallel initiatives. The World Bank’s (2007) evaluation of training programmes found that 730 million USD were spent each year to build client capacity and resulted in individual participant learning, but achieved development objectives only about half the time. Making the leap from individual learning to better development outcomes and capacity impact required both good training design and an appropriate organizational and institutional context in which to apply the learning from training.

A group of donors and academic institutions looked at capacity development and estimated that around 25% of global expenditure of ODA was invested every year in capacity development. A compilation of definitions of capacity-building showed that any type learning and change activity could be included (research and development; human resource development, training for project staff, training beneficiaries, capacity-building in various sectors such as health; agriculture; environment, trade, education, etc.).

In parallel, there was a renewed interest in skills development for poverty reduction, promoted in particular through NORRAG. A number of donors (e.g. DFID), IFIs as well as the outcome documents of global conferences (e.g. MDG Summit) put TVSD back on the international agenda. World Bank policies on secondary, higher & general education, and on skills development, as well as the World Development Report of 2007 on youth made a strong plea to include TVSD which had been neglected since the 1970s.

Agriculture, education and training (AET), which had been largely abandoned by governments and donors, also regained momentum. The World Bank gave increased attention to AET which relates directly to research and development, innovation and agricultural intensification. Agricultural extension and agricultural advisory services are part of AET, and graduates will find employment in this sector, which plays a key role for increasing agricultural production. In a related development, the flagship programme “Education of Rural People” of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) gathered stakeholders, in particular at the ministerial level, to support the education of rural people at the formal level and through innovations in the informal sector.

Training in rural areas takes place at all levels and includes many forms and methodologies. For the analysis of training in IFAD supported projects, the all-encompassing ‘capacity-development’ was found to be too broad. Priority was given to training of beneficiaries and not to training of staff, including field staff, despite the fact that these forms of training and capacity-building absorb large budgets in IFAD supported projects. The selected priorities were AET, agricultural extension services and TVSD.

AET directly raises agricultural productivity by developing producer capacities and indirectly increases agricultural productivity by generating human capital for support services. With the renewed interest in agriculture and concern to improve productivity in a sustainable way, there is better understanding that strong agricultural education and training systems
are necessary to underpin such productivity gains. Investments in AET enable research, extension, and commercial agriculture to generate higher payoffs. The provision of AET at secondary and tertiary level, in formal or non-formal settings, in public or private institutions is widely debated.

Agricultural extension and advisory services play an important role and facilitate the access of farmers, farmers’ organizations, and other market actors to knowledge, information, and technologies. Definitions of extension have changed over time. The current understanding of extension goes beyond technology transfer to facilitation, beyond training to learning, and includes assisting farmers to form groups, dealing with marketing issues, and partnering with a broad range of service providers and other agencies. It has moved from a top-down to participatory approach, from public to private providers in many places.

The term “skills development” is generally used to describe a wide range of institutions and activities influencing employment and earnings. It is one of the primary means to build the capacity of poor people to participate and fully benefit from mainstream economic development. Strengthening the individual and collective capabilities of rural poor, youth and adults, contributes to fostering new economic opportunities in rural areas. Investing in the skills of rural people is also crucial in building their capacities to cope with crisis and confront food and environmental challenges. TVSD has the potential to enable rural youth and adults to access good employment opportunities, and enhance their entrepreneurial spirit.

IFAD carried out a number of field studies (Bangladesh, Ghana, Rwanda, Madagascar, Sudan, Colombia), undertaken in partnerships with the Network for Policy Research, Review and Advice on Education and Training (NORRAG), to better understand and appreciate the potential of training in the programme it supports and identify successful approaches.

The following results were achieved:

- More precise classification of training activities in IFAD projects to provide greater clarity about types of training currently provided, their outcome and impact;
- Identification of best practices and core principles, in particular targeting and selection of trainees and trainers; support to training providers located in remote areas; motivation of trainees and training fees; certification; consideration of gender differences; transition to employment and income generating activities;
- Identification of innovative experiences in agricultural extension and advisory services, vocational and skills training for off-farm employment;
- Improved learning partnerships and collaborations with selected international organizations working on education and training for rural people;
- Increased attention to AET and TVSD within IFAD operations.
**TVET, Agricultural Development and Rural Poverty Reduction**, by Edward Heinemann, International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Rome

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**Keywords**: smallholder farmers; new challenges; productivity and profitability, sustainability and resilience; sustainable agricultural intensification; knowledge-intensive; analytical skills; agricultural education and training.

**Summary**: This piece argues that the context for smallholder farming is changing across the developing world, and highlights the new challenges that smallholders face. Responding to these challenges requires sustainable agricultural intensification, to build farming systems that are productive, profitable, sustainable and resilient to the shocks of climate change. For farmers to adopt such an agenda they need a range of skills: not only life and technical skills, but also the ability to analyse and contextualise. The article argues that greater attention should be given to agricultural education and training, in the context of a new narrative for agriculture, and it concludes by arguing that there is a need for the international development community to take up this critical agenda.

In recent years, there has been an increasing recognition that a skills development agenda in the rural areas has to go beyond agriculture and encompass a range of life and vocational skills related to off-farm employment. Rightly so. Yet at the same time there has perhaps never been a more important time to focus on agriculture, and particularly to support to education and training for the two billion or so people in the developing world who depend to a greater or lesser degree on smallholder farming.

Across the developing world, the context for smallholder agriculture is changing – in some parts of some countries at breakneck speed. In the many rapidly growing economies of the developing world, cities and second-tier towns are growing fast – and ever-expanding urban populations with higher incomes provide new markets for farmers. In a significant number of countries, agriculture is now high on the political agenda, and in some of these, rural populations are being courted by politicians as never before.

Yet there are also huge challenges. The food price crisis of 2008 is widely agreed to have ushered in a new era of not only high, but also increasingly volatile global food prices. Large parts of the developing world face enormous problems of environmental degradation: declining soil fertility, salinization of irrigated soils, desertification, and increasing problems of water competition and water shortage. Climate change is exacerbating these trends, and creating new levels of uncertainty for smallholder farmers. And the new price environment for foods and the global interest in biofuels are driving large-scale investors to seek out land
for production – land that is usually being used by rural people for some sort of economic purpose. It is, in short, a world of new opportunities, but also of increasing risks.

For smallholder farming to leverage increased household incomes and provide a route – or at least a first step – out of poverty, it needs to satisfy a number of key conditions. It has to be productive, linked to markets and profitable; yet it also has to be sustainable in its use of the natural resource base; and, increasingly, it needs to be resilient to the effects of climate change such as increased temperatures, longer dry spells or excessive rainfall. What this means in different contexts will vary enormously, yet in all regions the elements of the challenge are essentially the same: how to make farming more productive, more profitable, more sustainable and more resilient. It is a challenge that is widely referred to today as sustainable agricultural intensification.

When, in the 1970s, farmers – particularly in Asia – substantially increased their productivity, they did so by adopting Green Revolution technology: improved seeds, increased use of agro-chemicals and irrigation. It was a relatively simple package, and while there were certainly constraints to its adoption – particularly for the poorest farmers – it was not generally lack of knowledge that prevented smallholder farmers from increasing their yields. The challenge they face today though is different, and far more complex. Sustainable agricultural intensification is not founded simply on the application of a known set of technologies and associated agronomic practices; although improved technologies are critical, much more besides is required. Farmers need to develop an understanding of how agro-ecological processes work, and of the importance of productive, sustainable and resilient farming systems, in which a range of different crops, livestock and even aquaculture activities all play a role in contributing to these objectives; they need to strengthen their capacity to draw on scientific principles and synthesize these with their own traditional knowledge; they need to be able to conduct their own research, analyse the findings and introduce innovations into their farming systems; and above all, they need to be able to develop their own, highly contextualised approach to sustainable intensification. It is a knowledge-intensive approach to farming.

The key questions then are – what are the skills that farmers need to pursue this agenda; how do they acquire these skills; and what sort of institutions can enable them to do so? Clearly, there are no simple answers to these questions. The skills include life skills, technical and vocational skills and, increasingly, analytical or ‘contextualization’ skills; the learning routes encompass primary and secondary education, technical and vocational skills development, extension or farm advisory systems, and farmer-to-farmer learning; and the institutions include key role for the public sector, for NGOs and – if perhaps to a lesser extent than in the non-farm economy – the private sector.

In many countries, educational syllabuses, even at primary level, have been urban-based, and agriculture needs to find its way back on to the education agenda. But if farming is to
be a modern, potentially profitable business that also addresses issues of environmental management and climate change, then it needs to be given new prestige. It will never become these things if it continues to be presented as the occupation of last choice, practised only when all other opportunities have been exhausted. All of this needs to be done in schools that offer a decent quality of education to their students, on a par with that offered in the urban areas. At the same time, there is a desperate need to improve the supply side of the equation: in many countries enrolment rates are lower in rural areas than they are in urban areas – and rural girls’ enrolment rates lower still (although in many countries women play the dominant role in smallholder production), and rural children typically spend less years in education in than their urban counterparts. Expanding access to education remains a key challenge.

Farmer training and advisory services also need transformation. It is no longer adequate to ‘extend’ messages or to ‘demonstrate’ technologies and practices, because the challenge farmers face is no longer simply one of ‘adoption’. Today, rural advisory services (RAS) need to enable farmers develop a broader range of skills: they “are about strengthening capacities, empowering rural people, and promoting innovations. RAS support people to obtain skills and information, and to address challenges so as to improve their livelihoods and well-being.” They still need to disseminate information, not only about technologies, but also about markets, inputs and financial services; in addition they need to assist them to develop their farming, environmental and management skills, better deal with risk, access markets on more favourable terms, and interact more effectively with the private sector, research, education, and government.

What role can the private sector play in all this? Arguably, a somewhat narrow one, limited to promoting a relatively narrow range of technical skills (such as fertilizer use, or production of specific crops). This leaves governments with a central role in enabling rural people to develop the life skills and, increasingly, the analytical skills they need for sustainable agricultural intensification. NGOs too can play a key role in many countries, though typically they provide intensive approaches that may work well in limited contexts, but which are not easily up-scalable. Farmer-to-farmer learning approaches, such as farmers field schools, and farmer-centred approaches, built around farmers’ own organizations, are also a key element of the equation and are likely to become only more so. And the international development community, which has given little attention to these issues in recent years, needs to come back to the table and increase its support for this critical agenda.

References

Specialised Skill Development in Resource-Poor Settings: the Case of Pharmacy in Malawi,

by Zoe Lim, School of Pharmacy/Education, University of Nottingham

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Keywords: Profession, task shifting, pharmacy, needs-based

Summary: This paper aims to fill the literature gap, which is dominated by Anglo-American model of professionalism, about the process of professionalisation in a postcolonial, aid-dependent context; and to demonstrate how the perceived superiority attached to the professions has inhibited innovative manpower strategy, such as professional-technician task shifting.

Introduction: a pharmacy PhD that investigates ‘skills’ versus ‘needs’

To rapidly scale up human resource for health in resource-poor countries with a critical shortage of health professionals, ‘cadre substitution’ or ‘task shifting’ has been proposed as a cost-effective solution (Dovlo, 2004). Clinical tasks that are conventionally performed by health professionals are re-delegated to technicians, a manpower strategy which was supported by evidence of equivalent competency showed by technicians (Chilopora et al., 2007). This prompts the question ‘why do we need professionals?’ If technicians can perform an equally good job, why should we train the professional cadre? This forms one of the research questions in a PhD project which explored issues surrounding capacity building strategies in pharmacy education in resource-poor settings. This PhD project was mandated by an international pharmacy education coalition called the ‘WHO-UNESCO-FIP Pharmacy Education Taskforce’ (see http://www.fip.org/pharmacy_education), which aimed to advance pharmacy education worldwide, particularly in sub-Saharan African countries. An ethnographic study was carried out in Malawi, an under-resourced country which has traditionally relied on the technician cadres in public healthcare service provision.
Findings: it was not just about ‘skills’

It was found that there was a discrepancy shown between old-time and present-time pharmacy technicians’ job performance, which was explained by perceptual barriers stimulated by the present-day socio-political culture in Malawi. Within a political culture that misleadingly interpreted ‘democracy’ as freedom from accountability, civil servants conveniently surrendered responsibility for their work to their superiors. Pharmacy technicians therefore refused to assume the managerial responsibility that was felt should be borne by pharmacists, who received a much higher salary and enjoyed higher status in the occupational hierarchy. This was exacerbated by a rigid salary structure in the public sector that imposed a substantial income differential in the otherwise artificial professional-technician divide. Meanwhile, pharmacists were thought to possess professional ‘power’ and ‘ethics’ that could not be claimed by the technician cadre. When Malawi started to produce medical doctors, the pharmacy sector had to follow suit in order to maintain the status equality between the professions. Professional power was perceived to be needed for negotiation for public resources, or simply for effective inter-professional communication. On the other hand, a weak regulatory structure and enforcement in the public sector failed to govern health workers’ behaviour in the face of rampant drug pilferage. It was therefore perceived that professional ethics was urgently needed to restore public accountability.

Professionalisation in a post-colonial, aid-dependent setting

In other words, professionals are needed in Malawi not for their specialised technical skills but the traits attributed to professions such as power and ethics. This contradicts sociological theories about professionalism that proposes such traits must be earned by the profession proving its worth to its service users (Freidson, 2001). In fact, the embedded ideas about professionals’ moral and intellectual superiority in Malawi could be traced back to its colonial legacies and influence exerted by the international community. By ‘borrowing’ the Anglo-American model of professionalism, ideas about professional traits are also copied. Such implanted ideas about ‘only the professionals can do it’ formed perceptual barriers that inhibited implementation of innovative manpower strategies such as task shifting. Agency-driven professionalisation, as proposed by the orthodox model, did not take place in Malawi because of the extremely small number of pharmacists in the country. Even with the establishment of the first pharmacy school in Malawi, continual outflow of graduates to the private sector (or out of the country altogether) was most likely to happen, thus preventing a build up of a critical mass of public service pharmacists. ‘Local needs-based’ pharmacy services, without home grown ideas, therefore remain a globalised popular idea that is practically unviable in the nearest foreseeable future.

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Skills for the Marginalized Youth: Breaking the Marginalization Cycle with Skills Development, by Guy Bessette, CIDA, Gatineau, Canada

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**Keywords:** Technical and vocational education; marginalised unemployed youth; gender, literacy and basic life skills; financing mechanisms; certification and validation

**Summary:** This paper presents three challenges in facilitating access to demand-driven technical and vocational training to marginalised youth.

In recent years, models of skills development and technical and vocational education have moved from a provider-driven training model, where people received training without the assurance that it was aligned to an identified need in the labour market, to a demand-driven one. The need to link training to employment (either self or paid employment) is at the root of all the good practices and strategies documented.

This being said, training initiatives have been mostly targeted at the formal sector of the economy, while vast numbers of youth live in poverty and engage in some economic activity in the informal sector. Today there are still approximately 74 million youths who do not attend either primary or secondary school and are unemployed.

The question is: how can we facilitate access to demand-driven technical and vocational training to marginalized youth?

A first challenge is to identify who are the marginalized unemployed youth. Identifying the sub-groups of vulnerable young women and men who are outside the formal training system and work place, understanding their needs and situation, and linking this analysis to a situational analysis in term of needs in the labour market or the livelihood system seems like our first task.

Gender is, of course, a key factor in doing so. The skill gaps that currently exist worldwide between men and women have resulted from a number of factors including lower literacy rates for women, limited ability of women to travel to training centres, and social factors that put pressure on women to enter training for traditional occupations instead of training
that is geared to new demands of the labour market. Men’s and women’s needs with regard to their economic participation also differ. Women require specific support to address the fact that they are responsible for the majority of domestic work when interventions for skills development, training or education are created.

Some conditions have been identified to make technical and vocational programs more welcoming to women: employing female instructors and support staff; facilitating access to child care services; reducing the distance to training program sites; supporting older women who are re-entering the labour market or who have not completed basic education; scheduling non-formal skills for employment (SFE) programs in consultation with women trainees; using culturally-appropriate teaching methodologies; providing segregated and protected dormitories, and adequate sanitary facilities; and ensuring that staff are trained to prevent and respond to sexual harassment and violence.

A second challenge consists in linking literacy and basic life skills to technical and vocational education. For marginalized and out-of-school youth, the lack of literacy and basic life skills limits their life chances, including access to employment and/or technical and vocational training, and restricts opportunities for earning a living, whether in formal or non-formal sectors. Literacy provides the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute. Basic life skills can include, depending on the context, abilities such as cultivating self-confidence, developing the ability to communicate, acquiring discipline, respecting work ethic, developing tools for conflict resolution or decision-making, etc. It can also refer to some basic knowledge in health, including sexual health, child and maternal health; finances, including managing one’s income and drawing up budgets; safety and security; agriculture basic knowledge; etc. They are prerequisite to any vocational or technical training as well as putting that training in action. Other generic management skills that support business development and access to markets are also included, often with a focus on developing entrepreneurship abilities.

A third challenge is to put in place the financing mechanisms that facilitate access to marginalized groups such as youth engaged in subsistence economy. Skills training is very costly, on the average four times more expensive than general secondary education. In many developing countries, state funding is inadequate to meet the high costs of equipment, materials, infrastructure and instructor training needed to offer quality demand-driven TVET programs. There is also a high risk that governments will transfer the cost to the users, thereby increasing student tuition fees. This will de facto limit the access for disadvantaged youth and limit the capacity of families to benefit from skills training program as a means out of poverty. Alternative financing mechanisms and pro-poor policies should be put in place. These may include: a tax levy on payroll. For instance, in Jamaica, the HEART Trust National Training Agency is funded by a 3% tax levy on the payroll paid by employers of SMEs and large companies; Education saving plans offered by banks and credit unions to allow families to save over time for the future cost of tuition fees (with contribution from the state to the savings plans); scholarships for disadvantaged students to cover tuition costs; sliding scale of tuition fees determined according to the family revenue (the poorer the family, the lower are the tuition fees) or others.
There are of course many other considerations. One of these points to the need for prior learning assessment recognition, validation and certification mechanisms for non-formal technical and vocational training. Disadvantaged and marginalized youth often have greater access to non-formal skills training programs offered through apprenticeships and/or by local/international NGOs. The need here is to define quality standards for skills training, provide supervision of non-formal programs (including apprenticeship), provide training and capacity building to reach the standards and certify that those programs meet the required standards (even if accreditation may not be feasible given that non-formal programs are generally not provided by established institutions). To break the cycle of disadvantage, poor youth need to access quality training and receive official certification for the training received and completed. This will facilitate their integration in the formal labour market and life-long learning.

Note: this short paper is adapted from comments addressed to the GMR team in their online consultation on skills development for the 2012 GMR.
TRAINING IN, FOR, AND OUT OF THE INFORMAL SECTOR?
Training For Work in the Informal Sector? by Fred Fluitman, formerly ILO, now consultant, Turin

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Keywords: Informal sector; training for work; no silver bullet

Summary: Making an all-out effort at boosting skills for people at work in the informal economy of developing countries is not like flogging a dead horse. It may be complicated but it should definitely be worth trying.

Some 30 years ago there was considerable focus and debate on science and technology as necessary ingredients for the rapid development of developing countries. A major global conference of the sort that would in later years cover various other key issues was devoted to the subject in 1979, in Vienna. Related international institutions, since disbanded, were set up in its wake. While in particular ‘big science’ and ‘high tech’ were called upon to play their part, the ‘small is beautiful’ and ‘appropriate technology’ advocates could also count on a hearing. Indeed, various questions were raised about the technological capabilities of the ‘working poor’, including those in what had come to be designated as the informal sector of developing countries. Initial calls for stepping up conventional vocational training programmes were heeded by a range of donor countries but largely muted both by the relative inefficacy of the interventions and by donors moving on to new areas of interest, such as education for all. The lack of relevance and impact of conventional training programmes gradually led to calls for radically new approaches so as also to bring skills and improved productivity to large numbers of people at work or bound to end up in the myriad of micro enterprises of developing countries.

The idea of training for work in the informal sector has meanwhile become a well-established item on various development agendas. It has been researched, documented in detail, and discussed in prominent circles. Plans, programmes and projects have been developed, funded and implemented in countries around the world. Depending on the place, the idea that ‘the other half’ might also benefit from a well-targeted skills boost has been embraced as a new panacea, or ridiculed, experimented with, ‘mainstreamed’ as part of national education efforts, put into practice with relative success, or mistreated and abandoned where it turned out to be too hard to handle.

While there are undoubtedly cases to show that efforts at skills development for the informal economy made all the difference to certain cohorts of young people, the record is on the whole disappointing. The fact that interventions have often failed to meet expectations does not mean, however, that they were based on wrong premises. Results surely depended on how realistic the expectations were, how appropriate the interventions, and how capable the implementers. In many instances training people for work fared no better than adult literacy campaigns or massive efforts at bringing education to all.
The important thing is, of course, to accept and effectively pursue the principle or the conviction that in order to make a decent living people should in one way or another be gainfully employed and adequately equipped for the purpose. And to insist that this principle also applies, perhaps particularly so, to people at work at low levels of productivity and income, many unseen, ignored or inadequately aggregated in statistics as ‘others’, i.e. those who missed the boat to the formal, organised, structured or whatever-you-call-it economy.

By the same token, asking for evidence of skills development contributing to poverty reduction in informal sectors may imply that without legal proof thereof, one had better forget about investing in such skills. Who in their right mind, may I ask, would close down primary schools for disappointing rates of return, if in fact such rates are measured anywhere and taken seriously? Widespread poverty cannot ever be resolved without large-scale skills development. The question is therefore not whether or not, but how it should be done effectively. And the answer, as so often, depends on more things than most people care to imagine. Silver bullets do not apply!

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Non-Formal Apprenticeships for Rural Youth – Questions that Need to be Asked, by Dorte Thorsen, University of Reading

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Keywords: West Africa; non-formal apprenticeships; decision-making; youth agency

Summary: This piece examines the decision-making surrounding rural youths’ entry into non-formal apprenticeships and draws attention to issues that may make youth less interested in completing an apprenticeship or decrease the benefits of technical training.

Across developing countries, skills development and technical training are identified as means to increase youth’s future employability in decent work and eliminate the worst forms of child labour amongst those below 18 years. In West Africa, the entry requirements and costs of attending technical college exclude children of poor families from pursuing formal training. This does not mean, however, that young people and their parents are oblivious to the potential of developing technical skills as a means to break the cycle of poverty; the desire to enter non-formal apprenticeships has risen dramatically in the past decade, as has the opportunity to join one of the numerous workshops in the cottage industries.

The dynamics of non-formal apprenticeships vary significantly. In the coastal countries of West Africa, for example, it is common for apprentices to pay fees ranging from US$ 55-312,
whereas in the Sahelian countries apprenticeships are mostly mediated through social networks. Payment or not, the apprenticeships are similar in their informal arrangement and resemblance of a socialisation process or an initiation rather than professional training. Policies addressing youth’s skills development and technical training seek to improve and standardise these non-formal apprenticeships to ensure that the transfer of skills is adequate and happens within an appropriate time frame. The focus is thus on the provision of technical training, but very little is known about why and how youth enter certain trades or about differences in training opportunities that may exist between rural and urban youth. Based on multi-sited ethnography of young people’s migration from rural Burkina Faso to the capital and neighbouring countries, this piece examines the decision-making surrounding rural youths’ entry into non-formal apprenticeships. For them, relocation is a precondition for learning other skills than farming, trade or being a blacksmith, cobbler, etc.

Amongst policy-makers, it is believed that skills development and technical training for children of the rural poor should aim at increasing their employability in rural areas but does this idea correspond with the aspirations of the rural population? In rural Burkina Faso, both adults and young people consider non-formal apprenticeships as a path to social mobility and a remedy for broken dreams when children have to drop out of school against their will but, similar to school education, apprenticeships raise aspirations of off-farm work that offers better prospects for the future than straddling various livelihood activities in remote villages. Additionally, for parents, apprenticeships are a way to deter youth in their teens from becoming labour migrants and thus serve as a protective mechanism.

The father of an 18-year old tailoring apprentice explained how he had arranged an apprenticeship for his son in the capital, Ouagadougou, three years earlier when he saw that the boy would not accept to just farm and was likely to suddenly leave for Côte d’Ivoire like so many other boys. “He was too young to do hard physical work and would either suffer because of the work or because he didn’t earn enough to eat well.”

Not all youth appreciate this protection however. Becoming an apprentice implies working for three to four years without earning an income, after which a measly income can be reaped from work under the patron. As labour migrants, youth can earn an income - albeit small - from the day they find employment or engage in informal services such as shoe-shining, transporting goods, itinerant trade, etc. Moreover, an apprenticeship entails acquiescing to a subordinate position just at a time when many youths seek a degree of autonomy through migration. Hence, youth are not always interested in non-formal skills development and training.

How youth become apprentices is another question about which little is known. It is assumed that young people convey to adults what they would like to do, whereupon they will start an apprenticeship in that trade but, in fact, this does not fit well with the way in which social relations and labour usually work in the informal economy of West Africa. Here people are put to work due to their position in the network of kin rather than to their skills and interests. It is thus important to raise questions about who has a say in choosing the trade and the degree to which young people can pursue their own interests. The story recounted by the tailoring apprentice is illustrative:
My grandfather decided I should learn mechanics and my father that I should learn tailoring. I liked my grandfather’s idea but it is difficult to find an apprenticeship as a mechanic here in Ouagadougou. Some require fees to be paid making it more difficult. When I first came, I asked relatives to help me find a garage but when they didn’t have the time to search on my behalf and I had no luck within the first month, I resigned myself to tailoring. I learned tailoring from a relative; so no fees were required.

Young people usually rely on relatives or friends to take them on as apprentices or to mediate an apprenticeship and guarantee their interest in learning the trade. Here rural youth are disadvantaged compared to urban youth because they rely on links between their relatives in the village and possible patrons or on the help of urban-based relatives who may be approached by youth from different branches of the family. Another issue is that within the extended family, several people may seek to assert their views on what is best for a child, and while this may create more opportunities and thus give a young person an individual choice, it may also create conflicts. As a result, relatives sometimes shy away from assisting a young person in order to avoid accusations of disrespecting a senior family member who had another vision for the youth. Finally, the number of small one-person workshops has mushroomed in urban areas, implying that it has become easier to find a relative or a patron willing to expand the business with apprentices. However, not all patrons have adequate technical skills to impart or an established circle of clients to provide work through which apprentices can learn.

Young people’s access to non-formal apprenticeships thus depends on their family’s economic and/or social endowment. Whether their future employability really is improved or their prospects for starting their own workshop successfully depends on the quality of their technical training and the interest they muster in learning the trade, especially if they would rather have done something different.

Follow-up resources


'Skilling' the Workforce in India – different models? by Jeemol Unni, Institute of Rural Management, Anand, Gujarat, India

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Keywords: India; youth; demand-supply; National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganized Sector (NCEUS); National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC)

Summary: India’s youth bulge will not yield a ‘demographic dividend’ for the country while so many of them lack skills. There are currently many skills development initiatives underway, but supporting on the job training in the massive unorganized sector should be a priority as this is where most jobs for the youth are created.

One of the biggest development failures in India is lack of focus on universalizing education in the early years of independence. India today has the largest youth population and this is likely to grow till 2025, beyond any other country in the world. However, this does not truly prove to be a 'demographic dividend' as the majority has very low levels of education and formal skill training. This lack of a skilled workforce is a stumbling block to fast economic growth of the country.

There now is recognition of the mismatch of the demand for and supply of skilled workers in the economy. Recognizing this skills deficit, the Finance Minister announced in his 2008-09 budget speech that “…There is a compelling need to launch a world class skill development program in Mission mode that will address the challenge of imparting the skills required by a growing economy. Both the structure and the leadership of the Mission must be such that the program can be scaled up quickly to cover the whole country.” (http://www.nsdcindia.org/about-us/organization-profile.aspx)

The National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganized Sector (NCEUS) had proposed a scheme of Skill Formation and Employment Assurance in 2009, which would provide entitlements to all registered youth in the unorganized sector to receive training through placements. It was intended to provide employment to poor youth with at least primary but less than higher secondary levels of education for about six months and impart to them formal marketable skills. Pilot projects in some 50 non-metropolitan smaller towns with population between 50,000 and 500,000 would be taken up first, followed by youth in the rural areas and larger towns. The financial provision per worker would be US $ 218 which would cover on-the-job training/employment, cost of certification and cost of training/incentive to the provider/employer. This one-time financial outlay of US $ 218 per worker was intended to be the same as that provided under the (National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA). A provision of US $ 2180 million over five years for this project would thus ensure additional training-cum-employment to 10 million persons through this mechanism, augmenting the present training capacity by 2 million per year under the programme (GoI, 2009). This innovative scheme for poor youth, however, did not see the light of day and the NCEUS closed down in 2009.
The government set up the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) in 2009, an innovative public-private partnership program (PPP) that aims to “facilitate the development and upgrading of the skills of the growing Indian workforce through skill training programs.” The NSDC will facilitate or catalyse initiatives that can potentially have a multiplier effect as opposed to being an actual operator in this space. To scale up efforts necessary to achieve the objective of skilling / upskilling 500 million people by 2022, the NSDC is encouraging ultra low cost, high-quality, innovative business models. It provides skill development funding either as loans or equity, and supports financial incentives to select private sector initiatives to improve financial viability through tax breaks etc. The NSDC will adopt a phased and detailed due-diligence process to select proposals for viability gap funding for vocational training. It will support a pilot and then scale up for proposals from organizations with no prior experience in this area. Since February 2011 NSDC has funded more than 30 projects. [http://www.nsdcindia.org](http://www.nsdcindia.org/)

One such private initiative funded by NSDC is iSTAR. iSTAR, set up by alumni of the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, proposes to build a bridge of economic opportunity to the organized sector for India’s urban underprivileged through effective delivery of skill training programs and placement services. It aims at economic development of poor men and women through delivery of high quality training programs that create measurable increase in skill levels. It also aims to build market linkages for the skills acquired through tie ups with various corporate institutions for providing employment opportunities. Further, the program is structured as an all round development program and to that end it aims to partner with colleges, micro finance institutions, NGOs and corporates for provision of the various training programs. ([http://istarindia.com/contact.html](http://istarindia.com/contact.html))

The iSTAR program is designed to address the key roadblocks faced by employers and employees in successfully addressing the skills deficit in today’s workforce. The design of the program is tightly aligned to dynamic industry needs and job market opportunities, focused on providing employment and not “employability” to the students, facilitating easy access to credit by creating accessible funding sources for training programs and providing targeted initiatives such as financial services and community services.

A number of top CEOs have left their corporate jobs to grab a share of the skill training market in the country ([http://urbanpoverty.intellecap.com/?p=9](http://urbanpoverty.intellecap.com/?p=9)). Some are putting in significant equity too, which reflects their confidence in the business proposition. Ravina Raj Kohli, for instance, has infused US $ 1,336,520 (or 1.3 million) equity along with entrepreneur Lathika Pai, into JobSkills, that hopes to train 1.74 million people in different trades over the next 10 years. “JobSkills plans to focus on tier II and tier III cities and is tying up with colleges and institutions for training their students and making them employable.”

Manish Sabharwal, a Wharton Business School graduate, is a pioneer in this field. His TeamLease Services Pvt. Ltd is India’s largest and foremost people supply chain and HR Services Company. Established in 2002, TeamLease provides Indian and multinational corporate clients a one stop solution for all their staffing and HR requirements. TeamLease claims to be the only integrated HR services provider, offering corporate customers an end to end solution including temporary staffing, permanent recruitments, payroll roll process
outsourcing, regulatory compliance services, training and assessments. (http://www.teamlease.com/company_profile.htm)

Government initiatives at the local level are not far behind. Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) has decided to enhance the skills of the urban poor to improve their job prospects. Apart from training, the youth living in slums would also get placement assistance and loans from nationalized banks. Youths above 18 years are trained under the Skill Training for Employment Promotion amongst Urban Poor (STEP-UP), an initiative under the Swarna Jayanti Sahari Rozgar Yojaya (SJSRY) of the Government of India. The programme targets urban poor for imparting quality training, where there is no minimum educational qualification for selection to the programme (Telegraph, 2011).

There is currently a lot of energy on the ground when it comes to skills development. Hopefully this will take us rapidly to a skilled workforce of at least 50 percent compared to 11 percent in 2004-05. The key is to provide skills that are relevant along with an entry into the formal sector or at least the larger enterprises in the informal sector. However, the route suggested by NCEUS, to support an on-the-job model of training, as it exists in the unorganized sector should also be considered as the largest need and employment is generated there. It would help to improve the quality of work in the informal/unorganized sector as well.

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Upgrading Informal Apprenticeship - Challenges and Achievements, by Christine Hofmann, ILO, Geneva

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Keywords: Apprenticeship; informal economy; non-formal training

Summary: Informal apprenticeship merits more attention in international skills development. There is an untapped potential to improve employability of graduate apprentices, productivity of micro and small enterprises, and the responsiveness of national training systems to labour market needs.

Informal apprenticeship remains the most widespread indigenous training system in many developing countries. Young people acquire occupational competence by working and learning side by side with an experienced craftsperson. The apprenticeship agreement is embedded in informal institutions composed of social norms, traditions, reciprocity and reputation. Apprenticeship in the informal economy is a home-grown system, well known and accepted by local communities, but generally disconnected from formally recognized national training systems. Upgrading it has the potential to benefit workers in the informal economy and to make national training systems more responsive to labour market needs.

Informal apprenticeship has been studied in many countries, in particular in Africa. There is growing awareness among policy-makers, policy-shapers and researchers of the potential for upgrading informal apprenticeship, not only to address its weaknesses but to make more of its potential. While a few countries have included provisions on upgrading informal apprenticeship in laws and policies based on pilot experiences, efforts at scaling up remain scattered, and evidence of successful policy interventions is very scarce. Upgrading informal apprenticeship can include improving working conditions for apprentices, training master craftspersons, setting skill standards, strengthening dialogue between apprentices and between business associations and community groups, raising public awareness, or creating linkages with medium or large enterprises. Formalizing informal apprenticeship remains one option among many to improve it.

Upgrading faces a number of challenges that have become apparent in various countries and contexts. A few are listed below.

One challenge is to create trust among relevant actors such as small business associations, formal or non-formal training providers, community groups or government authorities. If no culture of collaboration exists, prejudices and mistrust need to be overcome.

It is key to build on the main actors’ interests: small businesses that need helping hands and skilled labour and young learners who are eager to learn a trade and become employable. The workplace-based training system is entirely financed by employers and apprentices, and thus requires solutions that do not skew the incentives of both parties to conclude and
endorse apprenticeship agreements. Only if small business associations are in the driver’s seat – or small businesses if associations do not exist – can improvements be sustainable.

It is paramount to understand why and how informal apprenticeship functions. Interventions risk being poorly designed if they do not build on in-depth assessment of the system. Practices in informal apprenticeship can differ between localities and trades. Some of the system’s decent work deficits are due to “bad rules” currently in place, such as strong gender segregation along occupational lines. Others result from a lack of enforcement of the training agreement. If apprentices tend to leave the workshop before having completed their apprenticeship – because there is no additional value in staying on and waiting for graduation – master craftspersons might lose part of their training investment and discontinue offering apprenticeship. Alternatively, they might keep certain skills to themselves and thus try to keep their apprentices for excessively long periods which can result in exploitation. Both situations, “bad rules” or lack of enforcement require different types of approaches to improve the system’s performance.

Attempting to overcome all of the system's weaknesses at once including unequal access, lack of social protection, hazardous working conditions etc., risks over-burdening the actors. A step-by-step approach is needed. For example, introducing skills recognition systems through end-of-apprenticeship exams can open the door to standardizing apprenticeship periods. Moreover, change requires time. Well-performing skill development systems have evolved over years and often generations. Upgrading informal apprenticeship and building it into the national training system will exceed common durations of technical cooperation projects by far. Policy learning takes time, and rushed solutions are rarely sustainable.

Another challenge is to integrate upgrading informal apprenticeship into local or national development strategies, which requires a collaborative effort by a range of different stakeholders. Well-performing training systems can dynamize local economies by enhancing productivity, linkages between enterprises and within value chains. Some apprenticeship occupations can also contribute to achieving other development goals such as improving access to clean drinking water, sanitation or energy.

Two successful examples illustrate achievements with regard to improved quality assurance and enhanced recognition of skills.

In Benin, provincial governments have concluded agreements with local business associations to organize practical end-of-apprenticeship assessments jointly, twice per year. Assessment committees are composed of representatives from government, business associations, and parents’ associations. The names of successful candidates are broadcast by local radio stations.

The Ghana National Tailors and Dressmaking Association conduct a national practical skills test for graduated apprentices twice a year. The one-day exam is organized in around 50 centers throughout the country. Since 2000, around 65,000 apprentices have taken this exam. Successful candidates are awarded certificates at graduation ceremonies organized by the association at zonal levels. The certificate enables membership in the association, is
used to obtain permits and licenses from District Assemblies, and is accepted for acquiring visas under the American Lottery Scheme. The demand for this certification has increased and holders of certificates issued by National Vocational Training Institutes also take the association’s test to enhance their employability in labour markets. The intake of students for tailoring and dressmaking in training institutes of the formal training system has seen a decline in recent years thanks to the success of the association’s recognition system.

The ILO advocates for upgrading informal apprenticeship and has contributed to knowledge creation over the past 30 years. It has developed a comprehensive assessment methodology and conducted country level research on how the system works and can be improved in more than 15 countries. The ILO is currently working with constituents to upgrade and expand informal apprenticeship systems through technical cooperation projects in Bangladesh, Benin, Burkina Faso, Niger, Tanzania and Zimbabwe.

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Skills Recognition in the Informal Sector, by Madhu Singh, UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, Hamburg

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Keywords: Recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning; NQFs; certification; decent employment; productive skills

Summary: Given the vast amount of non-formal and informal learning taking place in the informal sector, more discussion is warranted on the question of how recognition and certification of skills can help the disadvantaged to learn further and to enhance their employability and mobility. The lack of formal qualifications makes workers vulnerable in securing decent employment. A few documented studies are emerging that highlight the role of skills recognition in the informal sector. In addition to restructuring existing vocational training systems, bottom-up approaches to skills recognition are needed.
Literature dealing with education and training for the informal sector has drawn attention to processes of skills acquisition and utilization. Informal learning takes place in multiple contexts, including periods in school, in formal or non-formal training centres, in short-term modular training, as apprentices, as learners on-the-job, in the family, through observation and imitation, or by means of traditional apprenticeships, and is passed from one generation to the next. These alternative routes account for the training of up to 90 per cent of a country’s workforce in some countries. In certain contexts, where literacy and numeracy do not play a significant role, learning by doing and talking is one of the most important forms of informal learning.

Given the vast amount of non-formal and informal learning taking place in the informal sector, more discussion is warranted on recognising and certifying informal learning processes in order to promote decent employment and social equality. The lack of formal qualifications makes workers vulnerable; they earn lower wages, their productivity is low; they are exploited by their employers, and they are often disadvantaged in gaining access to formal education.

While there is absence of formal skills development, the informal sector’s contribution to the GDP cannot be ignored. Rather, the informal sector with its productive skills has potential which needs to be made visible. The creativity and the competences of the people could be utilised for social development, for urban and rural development. Thus, it is important for the individual and equally for society and the economy to identify and document available competences that have not been formally recognised. Apart from having an intrinsic value for the individual, recognition and validation could encourage him towards starting a qualification; the learning that is recognised could be transferable (to the formal sector), and especially at the interfaces where the informal economy connects with the formal economy. It could reduce the amount of time needed to complete a certification and therefore require less time away from the workplace. By formally recognising workers’ skills, recognition could be a means for gaining opportunities for further learning and for enhancing employability and labour mobility. For the micro-enterprises in the informal sector, a better recognition of workers’ skills could be a way to overcome skills shortages and match skills demand with supply. It could also provide an opportunity to improve the overall skill level and work performance of an industry operating in the informal sector. The nation could have a better certified skilled workforce, empowered population, mobile and multi-skilled people which could attract investors to the micro-enterprise sector in the global village. The skill level and educational attainment of the workforce determines the productivity, income levels as well as the adaptability of the working class in a changing environment.

However, there are challenges for skills recognition in the informal sector. The process of recognition must be accompanied by provision of public infrastructure which is affordable, reliable and efficient. There will be challenges in identifying where skills exist, documenting those skills, communicating to the potential candidates, as well as administering the process. Methods will need to be established, such as portfolio review, written/oral exams, and demonstrations. A relatively open examination system relating to a national qualifications framework and the relevant standards would need to be created for more
transparency, so that it benefits those people who have often had to acquire their skills under conditions of great hardships outside the education system. Guidance and information campaigns would be needed for the learner to be guided through the process.

Up to now there are few documented studies on skills recognition in the informal sector. However, a forthcoming study in six African countries – Ghana, Mauritius, Seychelles, Botswana, Namibia and South Africa - in preparation for the ADEA Triennale in 2012, highlights the role of recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning as a means of facilitating participation in formal education and training, employability and labour mobility (Steenekamp and Singh, 2012 forthcoming). There is also direct evidence from the above study and other studies (Singh and Duvekot, 2011 forthcoming) of the growing appreciation of the role that the NQF plays as an enabler for recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning to happen.

It is important also to mention the ILO recommendation 195 on a framework for recognition and certification of skills (ILO 2004). According to this: ´Measures should be adopted in consultation with the social partners and using a national qualification framework, to promote the development, implementation and financing of a transparent mechanism for the assessment, certification and recognition of skills including prior learning and previous experience, irrespective of the countries where they were acquired and whether acquired formally or informally´ (Ibid. p. 6).

Skills development for the informal sector, marginalized for long, is beginning to re-emerge as a crucial area for TVET and skills development; however, simply restructuring existing vocational training systems alone is not sufficient. Bottom up approaches such as skills recognition and certification need to serve as a support in programmes for upgrading skills and increasing productivity in the informal sector.

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The Geopolitics and Meaning of India’s Massive Skill Development Ambitions, by Kenneth King, University of Edinburgh, NORRAG

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Keywords: Eleventh Plan; 500 million skilled; role of the informal sector

Summary: The note seeks to explain what lies behind a country with one of the lowest levels of formal training in the world wishing to make its entire labour force skilled by 2022. What role does India’s shadow training system play in understanding the limits of this massive undertaking?

India is no stranger to large numbers. But its current 11th Plan (2007-2012) has developed a scheme that appears to challenge even the wish lists of politicians. It has targeted increasing the proportion of formally and informally skilled workers in its total work-force from a mere 2% now to 50% by 2022, thus creating a 500 million strong resource pool. In this, it hopes to profit from a ‘demographic dividend’, gaining from the fact that its labour force is much younger than that in China and other competitor countries. It aims to supply the world’s future skill needs for some 50 million workers, apart from satisfying its own.

What lies behind this extraordinary ambition? What policies have produced these proposals for skilling almost half of India? How important is the perception of China’s substantial lead in skills development? How crucial has been the evidence that more than 90% of new jobs in India have been created in the informal sector? How critical has been the claim that such ‘training’ as has been available has been totally inadequate in terms of relevant theoretical knowledge? Equally important may be the modalities chosen for securing this skills goal. Why has the Government decided that a national vocational education qualification framework (NVEQF) could be essential to reaching its target? What is the implementation challenge with one year left in the 11th Plan. What have policy and politics achieved so far in the Plan’s most ambitious goal, - skills development?

We need also to ask about the meanings behind the recent dramatic rise of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in the policy agenda of India. What are the assumptions about the existing traditions and character of India’s culture or cultures of skills development? Is there in fact a shadow system of informal training covering most of the country? Is the massive planned expansion of skilled people in India simply more of the same, or is there a new paradigm involved? For instance how central will be the role of the private sector and of public private partnerships in the new skills training environment?

A further intriguing question must surely be this: how could India have achieved almost double-digit growth for years despite having a really tiny proportion of its workforce formally skilled? [Historically India has had an average quarterly GDP growth of 7.45% from 1997-2011.] This might suggest that it would be difficult to persuade the private sector dramatically to change gear and invest in training. The other paradox is that although the
relative wages of workers with general secondary education have been increasing, the same has not been true of workers with technical and vocational education. According to the World Bank (2006), the evidence seems to point to a decline in the demand for workers with these very same skills (World Bank, 2006: 4-5).

There is no shortage of unique conditions, therefore, in seeking to understand why the world’s second largest nation in population terms (1.2 billion in 2011) should be proposing the largest ever expansion of skilled people in the next ten years. For good measure, we may add a last issue which is that India, amongst the so-called emerging donors, appears to be promoting overseas aid to TVET at a much higher rate than any other donor, including Brazil and China. What model of skill development is being proposed abroad when until recently so little was being done at home?

Some of the answers are in King’s longer paper to the UKFIET Oxford International Conference on Education, 13-15 September, and in the other papers in NN46, by Kumar, Master, Mehrotra, Sharma, Singh and Unni.


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SHARING REFORMS, INSTRUMENTS AND MODALITIES
Mobility and Transparency: Some Cautionary Thoughts on Qualifications Frameworks, by
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Keywords: unintended consequences; transparency; portability; linearity; coherence

Summary: This article examines the 'dark side' of a current global fashion, National Qualifications Frameworks. It argues that in giving priority to an exaggerated belief in the merits of flexibility they could actually lead to new inequalities- denying the disadvantaged access to the 'powerful knowledge' they need.

It is almost a sociological truism to state that educational policies - indeed any policies, have unintended as well as intended consequences. However, like many truism, it is often forgotten. Furthermore, the latter can sometimes be more significant than the former. The recent tendency to use qualifications as drivers of educational reform is no exception.

I am going to explore the unintended consequences of the recent spread of national and regional qualification frameworks –in Europe and more widely. My aim is not just to criticise recent policy on qualifications, but to widen the debate about our educational priorities.

Over 100 national Qualification Frameworks are being implemented around the world, supported by all the major international agencies (OECD, World Bank, UNESCO, Asian Development Bank); so this is no marginal phenomenon. Furthermore, this global process continues despite remarkably little conclusive empirical evidence from those countries where they already exist.

This lack of evidence for many of the claims made for NQFs was supported by the recent ILO Project on implementing NQFs (ILO 2011). It is as if certain policies - NQFs are an example, but I would also include CBT (Competence–based Training) and curricula based on learning outcomes OBE), are beyond the need for evidence - despite the fashionable slogan calling for evidence-based policies.

Two of the main goals of qualification frameworks are transparency and portability of qualifications and the mobility of learners whether as students or workers. Before raising some questions about these claims, let me first put the positive case for NQFs

Transparency

It is difficult to disagree with the idea that those thinking of studying for a qualification or hoping to get their existing skills and knowledge assessed for a qualification need to know what they can expect to know and be able to do when they are qualified. Equally, other key users of qualifications, such as employers recruiting new workers or admission tutors
recruiting new students, also need to know what a qualified person knows and can do. That is transparency. More transparent qualifications should be more highly regarded and encourage more people to become qualified.

Portability

Traditional qualifications, especially vocational qualifications, have been much criticised as cul de sacs - they often led nowhere beyond themselves and were un-related to each other. Three aspects of this lack of portability of traditional qualifications can be listed.

1. Many vocational qualifications (VQs) provided no route to degree level studies. The only alternative for those with VQs who wanted to go to university was to begin again by studying for examinations designed for those at school.

2. Insurmountable barriers existed between general (or academic) and vocational qualifications. There was virtually no ‘portability’ between the two.

3. Qualifications were invariably only recognised within countries. This minimised the opportunity for learners, whether students or workers, to move between countries when new job opportunities arose.

4. Most VQs were tightly ‘packaged’ in relation to the occupation that they were designed for. For the learner wanting to change course or occupation, the only alternative was to begin again. No transfer between qualifications of what a learner knew or could do was possible.

All these constraints were identified by policy makers from the mid 1980s as ‘barriers’ which a single qualification framework (QF) would remove. A Qualification framework lays down criteria for gaining a qualification and moving from one level to another. Learners accumulate units or modules - unimpeded by the old barriers whether national or occupational, or those related to specialist fields of knowledge.

There are two kinds of problems with this Qualification Framework model that I want to refer to. One is that it has too narrow and negative view of the boundaries in the old system – boundaries can be but are not necessarily arbitrary or just barriers preserving an occupation’s interests. The second problem with the model is whether it is right to give so much emphasis to portability and transparency.

Transparency and portability re-visited

Transparency and Portability can be understood as slogans taken from the field of free-market economics. If the labels on goods are visible and they are priced with a common unit of exchange, the market in those goods will work best. A fine model, maybe for a supermarket (although not if you are a small shop keeper)- but what if the ‘goods’ are not eggs but evidence that someone has mastered difficult ideas and complex tasks? Is it even
possible to spell out what someone should know at the end of a course in a way that is comprehensible to a beginning learner. Surely, specialist knowledge and skills are intrinsically not ‘transparent’ to beginning learners. What you will know on completing a course cannot be explained to any unqualified person, except in the most general terms, by giving them a list of learning outcomes. Attempts to do so always end in trivialising what is to be learned. The basis of the relationship between learners and what they want to know or be able to do at the end of a course is not that of a buyer and seller. It is TRUST- in the teacher and the school or college. An over-emphasis on transparency undermines trust. It is just the same in any profession- we want go get well, we don’t want to know the steps the surgeon will take-we take on trust that she/he will take the right steps. By attempting to make intrinsically difficult ideas transparent the role of qualifications as a proxy based on trust is put into question.

A similar kind of argument can also be made about portability. There is a degree of arbitrariness in the boundaries between qualifications. However specialisation of work and learning has been the main driver of progress since industrialisation began, and defining boundaries have been part of that process. Boundaries need to be looked at as opportunities as well as barriers.

Qualification Frameworks and social change

The goals of portability and mobility pre-suppose a model of social change I refer to as de-differentiation- that occupations and specialist skills and knowledge are becoming more alike. To put it starkly, these goals assume that the differentiation of occupations, knowledge, regions and nations that has been a feature of the last 150 years or more of industrialisation is going in reverse and that differences are increasingly part of the past. Occupations are replaced by the same jobs which may arise anywhere in any country and any continent. A qualification framework appears to embody this model of social change.

There are 3 questions worth raising about this picture of social change that I shall mention. (i) Is the de-differentiation model of social change consistent with arguments for the specialist knowledge that will underpin any future knowledge economy? (ii) Who are these mobile workers so often referred to? I suspect they are largely of two kinds- the elite employees of multi-nationals who can and do disregard qualification frameworks and the unemployed from disadvantaged communities searching for the growing number of low skilled jobs that knowledge economies generate. They too will have little use for qualifications. (iii) What might be lost as qualifications are increasingly broken up into ‘transparent’ ‘bite sized ‘chunks to maximise portability, and learners are encouraged to construct their own pathways?

My answer to the last question is sequence- or the necessary linearity and coherence of learning. We know enough about the conditions under which people acquire difficult specialist knowledge. It needs to be sequenced in ways that ensure that learners do not miss key concepts. Pathways to powerful knowledge must be linear, and cannot rely on the
inevitably un-informed choices of learners. If access to specialist knowledge is important, its logic points in a very different direction to the logics of transparency and portability.

The logic of my argument is that portable, transparent choice–based frameworks will inevitably lead to new inequalities. The high achievers will largely disregard them and the disadvantaged will make choices that take them nowhere.

This is not a call to abandon national or regional frameworks; far from it. Within 20 years virtually all countries will have NQFs and there will be a growing number of regional frameworks. It is to recognise that their role is guides to users not prescriptions. The big question facing most countries is how to create knowledge-based and employment–generating growth. This can only be the result of widening opportunities for learners to acquire specialist knowledge and improving the specialist qualifications of teachers and trainers.

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How Can Skill Systems in Developing Countries Best Understand and Meet Industry Demand? by Paul Comyn, International Labour Organisation (ILO), New Delhi

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Keywords: labour market information; skills demand; skill shortages

Summary: Identifying and forecasting the demand for skills in an economy is a significant challenge for education and training systems in developing countries as the benefit of collecting costly data must be weighed against the cost of collection and management. It can be argued that in the first instance, the focus should be more on developing institutions responsive to local labour markets than collecting statistically rigorous data of questionable value.

Identifying and forecasting the demand for skills in an economy is a significant challenge for education and training systems in developing countries. As government and social partners move to harness education and training to support economic growth, the pressure to deliver skills required in the labour market becomes more acute. This pressure if oft expressed as a need to move from a supply to demand driven system and thus presumes the demand for skills can be clearly understood. Whilst it is generally recognised that the
early identification of skill needs becomes more complex as economies develop and become better integrated in the global economy, even in developed countries, there is evidence that detailed and sophisticated forecasting systems often fail to predict actual labour market fluctuations. Skill shortages and skill gaps continue despite costly and complicated systems to assess and anticipate skills demand. For developing countries, several key questions arise:

- How are the needs of local, regional, national and international labour markets to be reconciled?
- What data is the most important to collect and how can it be collected in a cost effective manner?
- What institutional arrangements need to be in place to strengthen the collection, analysis and use of data?

Understanding the characteristics and dynamics of labour forces and education systems in every country is a long-term proposition that requires accumulated time series data and ongoing associated assessments and research. Yet the availability of data and the costs associated with assembling and processing new data is often a serious constraint in developing countries.

Rather than give priority to developing statistically robust national systems of labour market information and analysis so they can attempt to anticipate skill demands, it may be more realistic for skills systems in developing countries to direct resources and effort towards enabling individual training institutions be more responsive to their local labour markets. Short term training needs of industry can be met by responsive training institutions. Whilst certain types of skills and occupations can be accommodated through programs of up to 12 months duration, they require flexible and responsive curriculum and resource frameworks. Programs of longer duration for higher level occupations involve a greater investment and thus warrant greater care in determining the location and number of enrolments. One option may be focus forecasting efforts on these courses and occupations and leave individual training institutions to determine the need to deliver shorter programs.

Regardless, it is possible to identify some common trends which can be termed good practices in the development of a TVET and skills data system in developing countries. These trends include:

- strengthening institutional arrangements responsible for overseeing the collection and analysis of TVET and skills data and disseminating findings;
- developing sectoral approaches in priority industries as a mechanism for obtaining information, particularly regarding broad trends in the demand and supply of skills and the way skills will be used in the future to feed into skills and workforce planning;
- using standard classifications, such as ISCO-08, to enable comparable evaluations across regions, and even internationally; standard classifications of occupations and qualifications enable qualifications and occupations to be mapped and thus used as a forecasting tool;
• using labour market outcomes of TVET and skills graduates as a fundamental measure of the extent to which TVET programmes are meeting labour market needs. Tracer studies help institutions adjust provision to labour market needs and enable public authorities to support the most relevant programmes and institutions.

However, it needs to be stressed that good detailed data costs money. The benefits of data sets are greatly enhanced if they can be collected consistently over time and so the question of whether the collection and management effort can be sustained over time is also relevant. The benefit of collecting costly data must be weighed against the cost of collection and management particularly in developing countries.

Skills and Technological Development – Hints from Japan’s Experiences in Iron and Steel Industry, by Kazuhiro Yoshida, Hiroshima University

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Keywords: Development late-comers; learning from Japan’s Meiji era; localizing foreign technology; sustainability

Summary: Many factors that were key to the success for countries to grow out of underdevelopment over the last half century were present in the policies and approaches adopted by Japan during the Meiji era.

Many developing countries have enjoyed a period of steady growth over the last decade or so, thanks to strong demand for commodities and raw materials. These countries are embarking on investment in skills development to modernize and increase the value added of the economy and remain competitive in the global economy. Growth led by the private sector has been a model prescribed by the Bretton Woods institutions for a long time. In reality, however, industrial activities of developing countries, especially low-income, are largely accounted for by small scale businesses that do not have capacity to acquire, develop and constantly upgrade skills by themselves. They tend to turn to the public sector for the support, or direct provision of skills development. But the public sector TVET has so often proven to be ineffective, because it lacks good policy, relevant programs and financial resources. How can they avoid this trap?

Late comers have an advantage, because they can learn from successful experiences of the forerunners and thereby achieve the goals faster. Japan was once such a late comer which embarked on its major efforts to industrialize during the later part of the 19th century, the Meiji era. The process of acquiring and internalizing advanced technology and developing the country’s human resources during that period can presents some useful hints.
The iron and steel industry was one of core industries which the Meiji government chose strategically for its known extensive industrial linkage effects and made a significant investment. At the initial stage, the iron and steel mills totally depended on the imported facilities and operated under the technical support from the Western engineers and supervisors. The government paid an extraordinary amount of salary to those expatriates. At the same time, the government sent selected promising youth to study abroad and learn advanced technologies. Upon return, they replaced the foreigners and gradually transferred skills to others and through trial and error developed capacity to build a national plant. During the process of internalizing the modern technology, local knowledge of the pre-existing traditional iron-makers was used in locating the site and choosing materials so that the technologies were best suited to the natural and geographical conditions. Most of the plants developed this way were subsequently sold to the private sector. This is exactly a BOT (build, operate and transfer) that eased the initial financial risk for the private sector which could easily build capital and expand the sector further.

Thus, the Meiji government made a strategic choice with respect to technology; it played dual roles of direct management of the industry as well as stimulating the growth of private industry; the government made conscious efforts to use the existing socio-economic system and local conditions related to the industry; and used foreign knowledge carefully with a clear intention from the beginning to own it and localize it without heavily depending on foreign loans so that the development would be home-grown and sustainable. For this, the government in the beginning did depend on foreign experts, later replacing them with national experts who were initially trained abroad but later at home. The development of university was also a priority for this purpose and engineering was an important discipline, which was followed by development of middle-level skilled workers.

Many of the factors that were key to the success for countries to grow out of underdevelopment over the last half century were present in the policies and approaches adopted by Japan during the Meiji era.
**India’s NVEQF – Sound Policy or Sheer Madness?** by Linda Master, LimeGreen Strategic Education and Communication, Johannesburg

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**Keywords:** national qualifications frameworks; Indian competency units; unit standards; NVEQF

**Summary:** An opinion about the proposed Indian national qualifications framework is discussed with reference to the South African NQF.

When a country with 28 states, 7 territories, many languages, a population way above 1 billion and an exploding new middle class of around 250 million, plans a National Vocational Education Qualifications Framework (NVEQF) a modicum of hyperventilation is excusable. What is so intriguing about qualifications frameworks, like the Indian NVEQF or South Africa’s National Qualifications Framework (NQF), is the eloquence with which it is possible to describe their purpose and the learning pathways through the framework. Reading a nation’s outline of their planned qualifications framework is to become privy not only to the country’s educational, social and economic aspirations but also to their collective sense of self. In many respects, when a nation plans a qualifications framework, it is putting into words a collective wish-list, as it is a sincere and open expression of the aspirations of a state for its population and it economic prosperity. Ironically, it is often those very values that underscore the establishment of a qualifications framework that can ultimately become the site of its undoing. From an education perspective, what lessons can India gain from looking at the South African NQF?

The values that underscore the South African NQF significantly influence its educational values. For example, South Africa’s NQF is deeply influenced by apartheid, and subsequently themes of equal access, social redress and social justice permeate the values embedded in the design of many of the qualifications listed on the NQF. These are noble values, but when used as the core values to drive education, another picture emerges. South Africa’s NQF has placed tremendous value on allowing individuals and communities to determine their pathways toward acquiring a qualification. This is driven by documents called unit standards which describe the outcomes necessary for a learner to acquire a qualification or a part-qualification. Once a learner has successfully completed a number of predefined unit standards, they may be eligible for a qualification. These qualifications sit on the NQF and are deemed equivalent to traditional qualifications. What has been lost in the South African NQF is a clear understanding of what it means to educate adults of all ages. The South African NQF downplays the role of knowledge and emphasises the importance of evaluation according to measurable outcomes. Consequently, there can be little or no uniformity in skills and functioning from people who hold these qualifications.

India, if it sets up a qualifications framework that does not have a healthy respect for knowledge will face similar problems. Focusing on measurable, behaviour-based
competency units is no guarantee of common standards across and within state lines. Ultimately, if India does go this route, it may be wise to consider some form of centralised assessment, where all learners participate in an assessment that is managed either by each state or nationally, and benchmarked according to industry best practice, both locally and/or internationally.

The sheer size of India should caution policy makers away from notions of national conformity and commonality. With the majority of the population working in the unorganised or informal sectors, serious questions need to be asked about how India imagines a qualifications framework can transform the working lives of these citizens.

A qualifications framework is not a pedagogy nor an education system, it is an attempt to quantify, qualify and compare qualifications. When a framework begins to dictate to education providers the way that courses have to be structured and assessed, then a new layer of potential problems are added to the system. Education, its delivery and design needs to make intuitive sense to teachers, lecturers, facilitators and learners, and if India’s proposed competency units make little sense to the country’s educators, there is little hope that the process will work.

India’s search for a viable national qualifications framework is no small undertaking. It should not be rushed into, nor should it be considered simply because other countries are moving in that direction. What is never communicated when writing about any qualification frameworks, is just how maddeningly unstructured and uncooperative the world of work and life in general actually are. Qualification frameworks imagine a neat and ordered world, one filled with clear progression pathways, social justice and equivalence; whether it is possible to repackage India in that form is anyone’s guess.

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**Which Way to Go? Political Realities vs. Best Practice. The Case of Mozambique**, by Jorgen Billetoft, PEMconsult, Denmark

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**Keywords:** TVET reform; relevance and quality of skills training; access to education; donor collaboration.

**Summary:** As demonstrated by the ongoing TVET reform project in Mozambique, the government and development partners are not always driven by the same agenda.

With technical and financial support from the World Bank and a number of bilateral donors (Germany, Spain, the Netherland, Flanders and Denmark), the Government of Mozambique
in 2006 launched a major reform of the existing TVET system. In short, the stated goal of the reform process is to “expand access for all citizens to TVET and improve its quality and relevance”. Furthermore, the government aimed at a training system that is flexible and adaptable to current market needs in a globalizing economy and that would recognize that training provision comes from a variety of sources including training in the enterprise., and which is financially sustainable.

These noble goals are stated in a so-called Letter of Sector Policy. The letter, signed by the Minister of Finance as a precondition for a USD 30 million IDA credit to the TVET reform, was drafted by a World Bank TVET specialist.

Other development partners (Portugal, Italy and Canada) have financed parallel TVET reform initiatives through separate bi-lateral agreements with the Ministry for Education (MINED) aimed at developing new (but not necessarily) competency-based curricula and, in the case of Italy, refurbishment of selected TVET institutions. Although partly aligned to the objectives of the TVET reform project, the project has not been directly involved in the implementation.

The development partners have been divided on whether to stress the importance of quality and consolidation, or whether to accept the government’s politically motivated desire to expand the system. A small group of donors has voiced serious concerns regarding the financial and managerial implications of an expansion, while others have supported the government’s expansion plans. However, the majority of development partners have not taken a stance in this debate, hereby indirectly supporting the government’s position.

“If I would say anything, there was a complete neglect on the part of the donors to insist upon a focus on quality improvement. Their representatives were mute. They were either not strong/confident/ or interested enough to take on the government’s approach possibly because they did not understand the policy debates sufficiently well to understand the key differences in the strategic approach or they chose not to because they were compromised by some other agenda... At the end of the day they... allowed the government to abandon its original commitment to concentrate on quality improvements tied to labour market demand which was the basis on which the Bank originally provided the funding” (written comment by TVET advisor).

The government’s priorities in many ways reflect the demographic realities of the country. The education pyramid in Mozambique is one of the steepest in Africa. A study of skills trends from 2005 found that while access to primary education has improved significantly in recent years less than 10% at that time made it to secondary education and not more than 2-3% of an age group completed 12 years of education. Although the access to secondary education has improved somewhat since that time, there is still a very considerable pressure on the government to provide educational opportunities for those who cannot be accommodated in secondary schools because there are not enough schools or not enough teachers.
In many ways this pressure is the root of the dilemma, i.e. whether quantity or quality concerns should drive the TVET reform. It also touches upon the question regarding what kind of education provides the best preparation for the labour market in a resource-scarce country. The government’s response is a two-pronged strategy. On the one hand, it has reluctantly accepted the ongoing TVET reform initiative with emphasis on quality improvement and consolidation, but at the same it has with considerable success sought to secure funding for an expansion of the existing TVET system with little attention to the approach and priorities of the ongoing TVET reform programme. This has been possible because the development partners have had considerable difficulties harmonising their approach to the TVET sector, resulting in several uncoordinated parallel TVET projects.

The result of this development is an increasingly stratified TVET system. The top is characterised by a small number (4-5) of refurbished and reasonably well-equipped TVET institutions capable of providing adequate skills training based on the CBET approach, while the rest consists of a large – and rising - number of under-resourced, poorly equipped training centres that are still a far cry from being able to offer training at a level matching the requirements of the labour market. Interestingly, no estimates have been made of the cost and resource implications of the two approaches.

In short, the government is driven by a predominantly political agenda focusing on supply-side concerns. Therefore, the intention is to offer as many as possible some sort of post-primary competence believed to enable them to earn a living of a kind. On the contrary, based on what is considered international best practice, development partners have been arguing that the focus should be on the demand of the labour market and that, if resources are spread too thinly, the reform will not have the intended effect on quality and relevance of the TVET system. Reflecting the Paris and Accra agendas, more recently there has been a tendency among the development partners to soften their position and accept the government’s priorities. This in turn has caused a divide among the development partners and the withdrawal of those most critical of the government’s expansion plans.

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Education, Employment and the Economy: How Does this Relationship Work in South Africa? by Peliwe Lolwana, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

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Keywords: Vocational Education; Labour market; Economy; Youth Unemployment

Summary: The relationship between education, the economy and employment is complex and interventions for youth unemployment must take into consideration this complexity.

More than 60% of South Africans are 34 years old and younger. Further, youth forms 70% of all unemployed persons in the country (Statistics South Africa, 2007). Various policies and interventions are proposed to address this situation. This paper attempts to interrogate these policies and interventions.

The problem of unemployment lies in three spheres, namely education, the economy and the labour market or employment. In the first place, it is a well accepted fact that education is an extremely important factor in facilitating easier transition for young people to work. Some studies have further illuminated this by looking at the type of education that makes access to employment easier. Cloete (2009) concludes that being educated has the most powerful effect for those who apply for jobs, especially if it is post-school education.

Educational attainments are one piece of the puzzle. The kind of employment created in the economy is another piece of the puzzle. Until the global economic downturn South Africa has been experiencing a ‘job-creating growth’. However this has not been high enough to match the labour force growth (Altmann, 2011). The employment growth during the 2000s grew in the age range 20–24 and stagnated in the age range between 15–19. The assumption that can be made here is that this job-growth favoured the educated and skilled in the youth group. Labour force participation also favoured the urban more than the rural and is still biased against the African youth. Unlike other developing countries, the formal sector is growing faster than the informal sector. This phenomenon poses questions about young people in South Africa who are not occupying the informal employment space, in spite of their high representation in unemployment statistics.

So, we have large numbers of young people who are unemployed, a shortage of a skilled labour force; an economy that is not growing fast enough to provide jobs, and an education system that is not supplying adequate skills to the economy. What should be done to solve this conundrum?

We must first understand that the young people who are currently unemployed are not a homogeneous group. From the schooling pipeline, the labour market is confronted roughly by several different groups of young people – some are early drop-outs, some with incomplete school qualifications and some with complete but poor school qualifications. Different interventions are thus implied.
Vocational education is usually the antidote for all those who cannot get into university. A recent review of vocational education in the United Kingdom by Alison Wolf is instructive to all countries and has particular lessons for South Africa (Wolf, 2011). A large under-educated population of young people is not likely to benefit much from the kinds of vocational education currently on offer and also proposed as interventions to the youth unemployment plight. There is evidence that the current training programmes have just been recycling young people and act more as holding places than providing meaningful ways of accessing employment (Singizi Consulting, 2008) The new administration is on a drive to revive the apprenticeship system that has completely declined, but Wolf points to the difficulties of expanding the apprenticeship system in a transforming economy and how these opportunities tend to favour adult workers than the young.

The labour market for which educational institutions prepare young people has changed dramatically. Youth labour markets have collapsed, forcing young people to stay at school longer and therefore early drop-outs are at a complete disadvantage at the employment line. Young people are more likely to find jobs in insecure markets, and are vulnerable to shrinkages that are constant in such sectors. South Africa in particular has not moved significantly from having an economy dominated by commodities, which has implications for the kind of labour required in such an economy. Wolf also points us to the advantage of a more general vocational education than the more specific one that is valued by employers, contrary to common wisdom of what employers want.

If we want to assist in the youth unemployment in our different countries, we have to understand the nature of this group, understand the kind of education and skills development they need, and understand the nature of the economy they will confront. The longer paper will use the South African context to tease out the pieces of this puzzle as an illustration of how we tend to find solutions in single spaces instead of confronting the complexity of the problem.

References


E-literacy Skills and Programme Improvement in the Informal Sector Market/Mechanic Village Schools in South eastern Nigeria, by Benjamin A. Ogwo, State University of New York, Oswego, USA

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Keywords: Informal Sector; Informational Communication Technology; e-literacy skills; Nigeria; Market/Mechanic Village schools.

Summary: This article explores the values of e-literacy skills and application of open learning principles to programme improvement of the informal sector Market/Mechanic Village schools in South eastern Nigeria.

The global system for mobile (GSM) communication occasioned the preponderant use of cellular phones in Africa. GSM as well as other information communication technology (ICT) intensified the need to provide e-literacy skills programmes to the citizenry. E-literacy relates to skills, knowledge, attitude entailed in the use of electronic devices such as mobile phone, computer, hand held and other ICT gadgets in personal, civic and occupational situations (Ogwo, Onweh & Nwizu, 2010). E-literacy skills include electronic data/information entry, storage, retrieval, appreciation and interpretation. Mandatory use of these skills has been imposed on world citizens in forms of e-government, e-learning, e-health etc. Thus the lack of e-literacy skills seems more debilitating than basic literacy skills because of the ubiquitous applications of ICT gadgets in civic, work and personal situations. Remarkably, the use of certain software improves the inherent potential of ICT gadgets to translate other major world languages to local languages. This has been of immense value for educating in local languages the population that lacks basic literacy. Furthermore, ICT has made mobile education, learning for all, opening learning more feasible than was previously possible.

The use of ICT in informal sector education programmes such as the market and mechanic village schools (MMVS) automatically entails more emphasis on the acquisition of e-literacy skills. The MMVS (out-of-school Vocational) were initiated by the United Nation Children’s Fund (UNICEF) as an intervention to mitigate the adverse educational effects of basic illiteracy among boys in informal business/craft training in South Eastern Nigeria. These schools were part of UNICEF’s initiative to address the problem of male dropout in five south eastern states of Nigeria wherein the Igbo people have shown observable dissatisfaction on the rate of return on formal education; which manifested in low males enrolment in formal education (UNICEF, 1999). However these schools have witnessed low patronage because the completers are not issued transferable certificates. This necessitated the intervention of the Education Trust Fund aimed at transforming the structure, delivery system and transferability of completion certificates.
The scope of intervention on the MMVS includes thematic redesign of the curriculum as well as including more vocational subjects and ICT based delivery system. Interventions on the delivery system are based on the application of ICT as well as open learning principles (OLP). The Nigerian National Policy on Education (FGN, 2004) described OLP as the modes of teaching in which learners are removed in time and space from the teacher. The main advantage of open /distance education is to increase access to education and potentials for individualized instruction through varied and flexible ICT-based experiences. Open learning enables the learner to learn at his/her own pace, time, place and style. Internationally, World Bank, UNESCO and ILO (UNESCO & ILO, 2002) have extolled the use of open learning for basic education, learning for all and vocational training while UNESCO (1998) stated that in today’s knowledge based society, those who obtain a good basic education through open learning will continue to learn throughout their lives and thus remain economically viable while those lacking a solid educational foundation are destined to lag further and further behind.

Conclusively, the informal sector remains significant in economic development of Nigeria and any investment on educational empowerment of the practitioners would have ripple effects on their productivity. By adopting OLP and ICT delivery system in MMVS, the students will have improved e-literacy skills. Many of the training tutors could be developed in local language thus improving learning and reducing comprehension challenges created by low level proficiency in foreign languages. Acquired e-literacy skills will be very useful in data entry and result interpretation of the ubiquitous diagnostic equipment found in all trade occupations. Furthermore, these e-literacy skills are also very useful in effective participation in e-government, e-commerce, e-health and use of personal gadgets. The MMVS is an outstanding attempt at empowering the informal sector practitioners and providing them with e-literacy skills that will make it possible to sustain their activity in the 21st century information age.

References


**Bridging the Divide: Connecting Training to Jobs in Post-Conflict Settings**, by Gareth McKibben, City and Guilds Centre for Skills Development, London

Email: gareth.mckibben@skillsdevelopment.org

**Keywords:** Ex-combatants; Indonesia; job creation; post-conflict; vocational training.

**Summary:** Mismatches between vocational training and jobs for ex-combatants in post-conflict settings are widespread across the world. These mismatches are, however, not inevitable. There are identifiable drivers, which can be addressed, and can go a long way to ensuring ex-combatants get jobs after training.

In spite of an overall decline in armed conflicts in the past two decades, 35 countries on average continue to experience conflict each year, resulting in 250,000 annual conflict-related deaths (GMR, 2011). Moreover, research suggests that close to one in two post-conflict countries relapse into conflict in five years or less (Goovaerts, Gasser & Inbal, 2005). In fact, it has been projected that 17 countries, which are currently experiencing a cessation of hostilities since 2006, are at a high risk of a return to warfare.

High rates of unemployment amongst ex-combatants can increase the likelihood of a relapse into armed conflict. For this reason, international organisations often intervene to secure jobs for ex-combatants in the aftermath of war, and vocational training is typically viewed as a magic bullet solution to doing this. The problem is that ex-combatants are frequently unable to get a job after training. This not only means that they remain unemployed, thus constituting a prolonged security risk, but it also creates unmet expectations – ex-combatants generally exchange their firearms for a job, not a stint at training. These unmet expectations often lead to a combination of disappointment and frustration, which can ultimately deter ex-combatants from engaging in a country’s peace process (IOM, UNDP & USAID, 2009).

Conflict-affected environments place enormous constraints on practitioners to deliver successful outcomes post-training. However, there are a host of commonplace programme failures, which heavily contribute to mismatches between training and jobs. For example, labour market research is often not conducted by organisations before they design and deliver training. The result is that ex-combatants are trained in skills that do not meet the demands of employers and, for self-employment, the demands of consumers. In Gulu, northern Uganda, for instance, thousands of women were trained in tailoring, but struggled to generate an income afterwards as Gulu’s small market could not absorb most of them (IOM, UNDP & USAID, 2009).

What is more, the quality of the training provided to ex-combatants is often substandard and too short to learn a trade. Further, ex-combatants are often not supported in their efforts to get jobs after training, for instance, through employment referral or business start-up assistance (IOM, UNDP & USAID, 2009). Monitoring, evaluation and follow-up,
which USAID describes as ‘critical if long-term reintegration and overall stability [are] to succeed,’ is also often absent or ineffectively implemented (USAID/OTI, 2010, Annex I).

Organisations, in addition, often fail to secure buy-in from ex-combatants. For instance, NGOs did not consult ex-combatants in Afghanistan in 2005 and found it hard to motivate them to participate as a result. Political buy-in, to mitigate bureaucratic opposition, is also often not sought after or secured (USAID/OTI, 2010). Moreover, war-affected local communities are often left to fend for themselves at the same time as ex-combatants are assisted. This adds to the resentment that local communities sometimes hold towards ex-combatants as perpetrators of conflict, which can make employers reticent to take them on (Specht, 1997).

Mismatches between training and jobs for ex-combatants are not inevitable and can be avoided. There are identifiable commonplace programme failures that can be addressed and by doing so can go a long way to ensuring ex-combatants get jobs after training. By way of example, GTZ (now GIZ) implemented a programme for former ‘Gerakan Aceh Merdeka’ (GAM – Free Aceh Movement) combatants from 2006 to 2009, controlled for the programme failures discussed, and got ex-GAM jobs after training them.

The City & Guilds Centre for Skills Development has recently published a report, which details why ex-combatants are often unable to get a job after training and how programmes can better connect training to jobs in the future. Implementing agencies and training providers can and must avoid the commonplace programme failures identified. Donors can make them more accountable through incorporating activities such as labour market research into budgets and reporting lines.

The full report can be found at:

References


Mainstreaming Self-Sufficient Schools. A Critique, by Nik Kafka and Erica Bertolotto, Teach A Man To Fish, London

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Keywords: School-based enterprises; Income generation in schools; Market-oriented skills development; Financing vocational education.

Summary: Self-Sufficient Schools provide a possible answer to the challenges of quality, relevance, access & finance of vocational education. This market-oriented approach uses school-based businesses to provide an effective training platform for student learning, while profits from these enterprises over time can generate sufficient funding to pay for the full costs of the education provided.

If education and training towards skills development is an important part of the solution to global poverty, two questions naturally arise.

Firstly, as governments, in line with Millennium Development Goals, direct their funding priorities towards primary education, where will the finance for improvements in quality and availability of post-primary and skills-based education come from?

Secondly, with labor markets in low-income developing countries typically characterized by a lack of formal sector jobs, self-employment remains an important means of earning a living. In this context, how can traditional secondary and vocational education institutions better prepare their students with the entrepreneurial skills needed to succeed?

Self-Sufficient Schools provide a possible answer to both questions. This innovative approach, combining entrepreneurship and vocational education, not only increases the relevancy of learning, but through school-based businesses provides both a training ground for students and a means of finance for the school.

Case studies from Paraguay, Benin and Nicaragua illustrate how secondary schools and post-primary training institutions have tackled the challenges of creating and implementing market-oriented skills programs to improve outcomes for students, while generating income to meet the costs of providing this education.
These examples also offer clues as to how the negative perceptions of vocational education can be transformed. It has certainly been argued that the low quality and unclear benefits offered by traditional skills development approaches has, in many countries, undermined the confidence of potential students and their families in its worth.

By basing skills training around creating products and services which are not only of a marketable quality, but also profitable, potential students and their families have the confidence that what is being taught will be of real value in the workplace. Combining this with hands-on entrepreneurship education covering business, finance and management, provides the additional reassurance that graduates will be ready for self-employment where this is the best or only option.

The extended version of this paper seeks i) to outline in further detail the Self-Sufficient School concept, ii) to draw together lessons learned from institutions currently using this approach, notably in the field of agricultural education, iii) to chart a path forward for this methodology, and finally iv) to suggest how its adoption might help plug the finance gap which currently limits the availability of sustainable post-primary education across much of the developing world.

*This full length version will be available as part of the UKFIET 2011 conference documents.*

**Follow-up resources**

Resource toolkit for planning and implementation of Self-Sufficient Schools
[www.teachamantofish.org.uk/school-box](http://www.teachamantofish.org.uk/school-box)

Back catalogue of articles on Self-Sufficient Schools and related topics
[www.teachamantofish.org.uk/newsletters](http://www.teachamantofish.org.uk/newsletters)

Network of organizations involved and interested in Self-Sufficient Schools approaches
[www.teachamantofish.org.uk/about-the-network](http://www.teachamantofish.org.uk/about-the-network)
Learning from European Training Foundation’s “Torino Process”, by Søren Nielsen, European Training Foundation (ETF), Turin

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Keywords: VET system review; capacity building; policy learning; EU VET policy.

Summary: this piece discusses the Torino Process on VET policy assessments in ETF 29 partner countries from a policy learning perspective and concludes that the instrument could be a valuable tool for increased national ownership of VET reform.

‘Policy’ is about visions for development and the ways to achieve goals. The policy learning concept was developed to argue that VET reforms in transition countries (and indeed any major reform in any country) will only be successful and sustainable if policy development, formulation and implementation are firmly based on broad ownership and embeddedness in existing institutions. The concept of policy learning was developed in a critical discussion with more traditional approaches to policy transfer and policy copying. It emphasizes the active engagement of national stakeholders in developing their own policy solutions. I will here present the ETF Torino Process through the lenses of the ETF policy learning approach and ask the question: to what extent may this process help countries to help themselves?

In 2010, the ETF launched the Torino Process to offer interested partner countries a framework and technical support aimed at supporting progress in their VET systems. The exercise, to be repeated every two years, intends to empower countries and reinforce national institutions so that they can implement the exercise themselves through ETF-guided self-assessments based on a common methodology to enable comparability.

The Torino Process is a participatory, analytical process of the whole VET system. Its main objectives are (i) to reinforce evidence-based policy making in partner countries; (ii) for ETF to serve as a basis for planning; and (iii) for ETF to support the delivery of Community assistance. The analysis is designed as a tailor-made country-led review process with broad participation/consultation of all key VET stakeholders. The methodology is based on a common analytical framework which has a double dimension: VET system assessment and VET policy cycle analysis. In agreement with partner countries, four key guiding principles steer the Torino Process: (i) country ownership, (ii) a participatory approach, (iii) a holistic assessment (the analytical framework targets the VET system and its environment), and (iv) the assessment is evidence-based. Partner countries can decide themselves on preferred implementation modality, either a guided self-assessment or an ETF-led participatory approach.

From a policy learning perspective the most interesting aspect of the approach is the focus on ‘vision’ and ‘state of art’ in VET, as defined by the countries themselves. Where are the countries now, and where do they want to go? The Torino Process thus establishes a platform for reflecting on and defining their own priorities.
While the Process is inspired by the Copenhagen Process and is drawing on the Open Method of Coordination, it also differs from the Copenhagen Process:

**Methodology: from Copenhagen to Torino Process**

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<tr>
<th><strong>Copenhagen Process</strong></th>
<th><strong>Torino Process</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>One common, agreed political and policy agenda</td>
<td>No common policy agenda/Diversity of contexts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Member States’ systematic participation</td>
<td>Invitation of partner countries to participate with not always obvious added value</td>
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<tr>
<td>Established institutional arrangements, roles and responsibilities in VET</td>
<td>Diversity of institutional arrangements</td>
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<tr>
<td>Policy review, reporting exercise</td>
<td>Policy learning, capacity building exercise for evidence-based policy making</td>
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<tr>
<td>Questionnaires</td>
<td>Collective, face-to-face discussion/policy dialogue guided by ETF</td>
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The Torino Process is an upward movement from the level of projects via programmes to policy and will increase the demands also on ETF to demonstrate its capacity to facilitate policy learning. Just as the ‘learning to learn’ in modern learning theory is about the ability for meta learning, ETF will have to work on a meta level with a focus on helping to develop the local capacity of partner countries to solve their own problems themselves.

All ETF partner countries have to find national solutions in a European/global context. The European Union experience will guide developments in candidate and pre-accession countries but can also support and inspire countries in other regions of the world. In the EU VET policy processes, there are good possibilities for shared learning – but the real efforts and the hard work will have to be made at home through own national priority setting and policy decisions. Policymakers and practitioners at all levels therefore have to develop the capacity to become “policy interpreters”, as there is a variety of models, measures and practices open to achieve the same goal. There is a need to develop capacities to translate goals into nationally preferred practices and to manage the internal processes involved in the policy cycle. In short, efforts to intensify the organisation of policy learning platforms and to establish meaningful policy learning for key actors and stakeholders will be key to enable country responsibility for owning VET policies.

If we measure the Torino Process against the policy learning approach, as developed by the ETF and measured by the following yardstick:

“Policy learning emphasizes not simply the involvement but rather the active engagement of national stakeholders in developing their own policy solutions, and is based on the understanding that there are no universally valid models that can simply be transferred or copied from one context to another. At best there is a wealth of international, though context-specific, experience in dealing with similar policy issues that can be shared.” (Grootings & Nielsen, ETF Yearbook 2005: 11)

- then the Torino Process may certainly stimulate the development and consolidation of a sound policy culture and environment, based on accountability and ownership of national policymakers and stakeholders. It may lead to a more reflective policy-making process where creativity and local capacities are properly mobilised, valuing also international
experience and results. Going from policy taking or policy copying to real policy learning, to a sound policy process for which national key actors and stakeholders take responsibility and ownership, requires new approaches in technical assistance. To achieve this ambition we need to stimulate the continuous nurturing of a culture of quality policy-making in education. The Torino Process could here become a valuable instrument.

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www.etf.europa.eu/torinoprocess

Lessons from TVET reforms in Africa and Asia, by Christian Kingombe, Overseas Development Institute, UK

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Keywords: Returns to TVET; TVET reform; sources for financing TVET; Sierra Leone.

Summary: The paper makes suggestions for how to address future challenges and opportunities to ensure that the good performance of TVET reforms elsewhere contribute to the promotion of sustainable growth through private sector development in Sierra Leone.

A recent paper by Kingombe (2011) examines the lessons learned from the experience in developing countries in the design and implementation of strategies for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). It is generally argued that the best TVET strategy should ensure that the youth gets an education. This is considered the best vaccination against the rapidly spreading youth unemployment. Hence, to counter the adverse effects of this on-going crisis TVET has returned to the international policy agenda as a major policy instruments. For example, the African Union’s Plan of Action for the Second Decade of Education (2006–2015) recognises the importance of TVET as a means of empowering individuals to take control of their lives and suggests the integration of TVET into the general education system. However, the integration of TVET strategies into comprehensive employment policies still remains a challenge in most African countries.

When planning for TVET, policy-makers and decision-makers should be able to make informed decisions that are supported by evidence-based information. There is,
unfortunately, a paucity of TVET statistics. The scarce data that does exist may meet some national information needs, however they can rarely be used for cross-country/regional comparisons. Kingombe (2011) provides a table on “Enrolment in Secondary education, 1999 and 2007 (latest regional data)” based on UNESCO’s Institute for Statistics database. The evidence shows that globally, the number of secondary students at the age group from 10 to 18 years enrolled in TVET increased from 46.6 million in 1999 to around 54 million in 2007. During the same period the World’s youth unemployment fell slightly from 73.5 million in 1999 to 72.5 millions in 2007, after which it rebounded due to the global crisis (ILO, 2011).

However, the enrolment rates and TVET’s percentage share of total secondary enrolment vary widely among regions. Although the 2007 shares in Central Asia (6%) and Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) (12%) were lower than in East Asia (17%), these two sub-regions, on the other hand, experienced the highest growth rates between 1999 and 2007 of respectively 129% and 93% (UIS, 2011).

In 2007 DRC (20%), Rwanda (16%) and Cameroun (17%) had the highest TVET shares of total secondary enrolment. On the other hand, a number of other countries had seen their total number of secondary students enrolled in TVET programmes grow at more than 100% in the same period, albeit from low levels. These countries were: Ethiopia; Zambia; Ghana; Kenya; Benin; Togo and Mali. Surprisingly, Niger was the worst performer with a significant fall in the total number enrolled in TVET despite the Government of Niger’s reform of the TVET system in 2006 (ibid.).

In East Asia although the total number had increased by 27%, the share had stagnated at 14%. Three countries had seen a more than 100% increase in the total number of enrolled TVET students. These were: Vietnam (189%); Bangladesh (140%) and Cambodia (131%). But in the both the case of Cambodia and Bangladesh the TVET share remained very low at just 2%, whereas in Vietnam the share was only slightly higher at 5%. China (17%) and Thailand (16%) were the only Asian countries with TVET shares above 15%, closely followed by Indonesia and Republic of Korea both at 13% as well as Singapore at 12% (ibid.).

Johanson and Adams (2004) rightly points out that getting the macroeconomic context right remains the essential first step in focusing on TVET. TVET does not create jobs. Skills are a derived demand and that demand depends on policies for growth and employment creation. A TVET reform generally consists of a broad range of TVET programme activities that focus on: Development of new national TVET Strategy and policy; Implementation of competency based training; New teacher training arrangements; A greater role for the private sector and more decentralised management of the formal TVET institutions.

Examples of good TVET reform practice in Asia includes: Republic of Korea; China and Singapore. Examples of good TVET reform practice in Africa includes: Benin, Togo, Senegal and Mali all of which are restructuring their TVET systems to incorporate traditional apprenticeships as well as Ethiopia. Experience in South Africa and experiments in Morocco, Benin and Cameroon underscore the need to associate social partners in TVET systems for the identification of jobs and the development of appropriate demand-driven TVET
strategies. For example, in 2001, South Africa revamped its entire training policy around its National Skills Development Strategy for young people seeking to enter the labour market.

Kingombe (2011) looks at the organisation as well as the development and implementation of a forthcoming national TVET policy in Sierra Leone based upon the lessons learnt in both Asia and SSA. In his review paper he e.g. looks at some of the major elements that such a national TVET policy should contain by highlighting recent cases of good practice e.g. in Ethiopia, Zambia, and Singapore. He also presents recent examples of cooperation with donors in the design and implementation of TVET policies, including initiatives derived from the DANIDA sponsored Africa Commission; the Mano River Union Youth Peace and Development Initiative etc.

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RESEARCHING OLD AND NEW QUESTIONS
Revisiting Research Priorities in TVET, by Shyamal Majumdar, UNESCO-UNEVOC

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Keywords: TVET; labor market; research priorities; UNEVOC; e-Forum

Summary: This piece examines the research priorities in TVET perceived through the lens of the traditional TVET orientation to cater to the immediate needs of the labor market. Another view is put forward in expanding the research scope of TVET in the context of the broader socio-economic needs of the society. The views expressed in this piece also consider the outcome of a review of the priority topics covered by UNESCO-UNEVOC e-Forum, a virtual community of TVET experts.

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is one of those disciplines with the specific concern in imparting the knowledge, the skills and the attitudes for the world of work. Throughout the long course of its journey, TVET is known for the world of work as a traditional provision linked with professional development, mobility, cost effectiveness and occupational standards, keeping pace with the new developments in the industries to ensure its relevance.

Given the scope of work that TVET tries to cover, defining research priorities plays a crucial role to make TVET not only relevant but also appropriate for its broader purpose; and makes the quality of information available to a greater number of stakeholders useful in defining TVET’s future.

There are two observed tendencies related to research undertakings in TVET. First is the tendency of existing TVET systems to confine research priorities to the immediate needs of the labor market that results in traditional supply-demand orientation of TVET. Second is the tendency to ignore the broader socio-economic needs that TVET can more effectively address. This results in drawing a narrowed view of research priorities in TVET that further dilutes the potential of TVET to effectively assess social dimensions in skill formation and to forecast the needs of the society and the economy in the context of a holistic development, independent of what the labor market dictates.

The lack of research culture particularly in public TVET contributes to the negative impact of these tendencies in the overall design and implementation of TVET programs and the restriction in asserting TVET’s unique role in the context of a balanced social, economic, ecological and cultural development.

Since the Seoul Congress in 1999 and the development of normative instruments in technical and vocational education in 1989 (Convention on TVE) and in 2001 (Revised Recommendations concerning TVE), new awareness had been created among countries in terms of observing innovative practices in TVET, aligning TVET with the rapid changes...
brought by the globalization in the world of work and acknowledging the emerging role of TVET in national development. These broad areas have overlapping concerns within them which, after more than a decade, remain to be examined through crucial lenses to understand clearly the complexities that surround them.

UNESCO-UNEVOC, a specialized agency for strengthening TVET in UNESCO member states, has, over the years, initiated and mediated a gamut of online and face-to face discussions on TVET issues and approaches through the various international programs undertaken in that last five years. In many opportunities, the topics that have been covered by UNESCO, which also functions as a clearinghouse of TVET information, are drawn from the upstream and downstream approaches.

UNEVOC hosts an e-Forum, which is a virtual community of TVET experts, researchers and practitioners from around the world who share information and knowledge about different aspects of TVET. The forum aims to improve understanding on various topics and to gain greater insights into stakeholders’ interests and priorities in TVET. Analysis of the content and structure of the five-year online discussions has led us to discover dynamic debates on topics that range from competency-based TVET curriculum, international accreditation and qualifications to competency-based standards, institutional development, all held with high and constant priority by online discussants in terms of the quality of discussion and frequency of responses. Discussions largely reflect interest in accrediting TVET institutions and recognizing TVET qualifications.

The popularity of these topics was analysed to have links with the reality that TVET providers and policy implementers have to deal with on a daily life basis. With greater existing knowledge on these topics, increasing the level of understanding, cross-sharing about cutting edge approaches done around the world or offering innovative ideas to make TVET globally relevant, are few of the secondary reasons why they are a priority.

Broader thematic issues, however, received less attention from the discussants till now. Even though discussions were started, there had been relatively small interest from online discussants to float multiple dimension discourse in key topics like TVET and poverty alleviation, defining TVET, HIV/AIDS in TVET, non-Formal TVET or greening TVET. This may have been because stakeholders may have had less experiences to initiate debate, or knowledge to discuss concepts at large, or had much more interest to expound on areas that can nail down genuine realities and opportunities at the ground level.

This reality supports the argument above that since TVET tries to cater to what the labor market needs, interest in making TVET relevant is well-grounded on what is perceived to sell in the labor market. As a result, thematic issues which may have had impact to future shaping of TVET concerns are less attractive to be discussed, less understood, and therefore are less prioritized. This is signaling weak foundation in terms of having these equally relevant issues seriously considered in making systematic definition of what TVET must focus on.
The quality of input to TVET system is just as good as the quality of output it will produce. There certainly is a constant need to revisit research priorities both in the context of the great body of knowledge that may exist but is lacking in concrete realities to reinforce actions and innovations, and the low quality of evidence-based information available to expand discourse about broader social and economic issues that have greater implications in defining the future of public TVET.

Researching Technical and Vocational Skills Development (SD):

The End or the Renaissance of Educational Research in Africa? by Michel Carton, NORRAG, Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva

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Keywords: social science and SD research; consultancy; research networks and institutions

Summary: Developing TVSD research in Africa is either a "dead end" or a window of opportunity for educational research. The political pressure and financial support for tackling the youth unemployment problems thanks to skills development could stimulate the researchers to overtake their individual scientific limits and consultancy "misbehaviour", as well as to rediscover the importance of institutions and networks for delivering relevant outputs.

There is a gap of nearly 40 years between the two following quotes:

“Indigenous apprenticeship is at the heart of the explanation of the birth and growth of a free enterprise economy in Nigeria. Many of the best Nigerian entrepreneurs have started in trade, construction or sub contracting activities” (A. Callaway, 1972, 188, data 1963).

“It is important to recognise that it is necessary, even urgent, to address not only the problem of youth unemployment and the lag between the educational system and the labour market needs in particular, but also the situation of people employed in the informal economy” (17th African Union Summit, 2011).

Did research have a role in the disappearance for 20 years in the development discourse about some key sectors like agriculture, informal sector, technical and vocational education and training?
Did researchers use their knowledge to demonstrate that the consequences of undermining universities in the 80s, as a component of structural adjustment programmes, would have a price to be paid up today in terms of research capacities?

Is this price not too high to allow research to play a role in today’s revisiting of the sectors that were at the top of the national and international policy agenda in the 70s-80s, and are today presented as “new”?

Coming to educational research, one can raise the following questions:

- Did it play its functional but also critical and forward looking roles not only about the study of schooling, but also of non-formal education and technical and vocational education and training, in spite of the ups and downs of the globalisation discourses and processes as reflected in the above mentioned policies since the 70s?

- Were the positions of some economic development pioneers like Lewis known by educational researchers, so that they could have influenced the policy makers when this author writes in 1955: “expenditure on bringing new knowledge to peasant farmers is probably the most productive investment which can be made in any of the poorer agricultural economies” (Lewis, 1955, 187)?

- Why educationists did not pick up the visionary analysis done in 1960 by one another development economist pioneer, Anderson, stating that “education receives only passing reference in most of the now vast literature on technological change, modernization and economic development? A few writers accord it major importance, but they (referring to Lewis quoted above) only occasionally amplify on their reasons” (Anderson, 1966, 259)?

- Did research policy makers draw some consequences in terms of a meaningful support to educational research, from one another statement by Anderson: “A functional approach to education requires attention to the relation between formal education and other training. Schools spread the basic sort of knowledge that encourage flexibility in later occupational roles and stimulate countrywide communication. Apprenticeship in various forms is essential for the creation of that kind of human capital we call know-how. In all these contexts, a loose structure without sharp boundaries implements the adoption of a functional program of education and its rapid diffusion” (A. Anderson, 1966, 276)?

- 35 years later, can we be optimistic about the future of educational research, when the President of the WB Group delivers a “revolutionary” speech of 14 pages on Democratizing development economics which includes only five times the word ‘education’, meaning that the influence of educationists on development economics is close to nil (Zoellick, 2010)?

Educational research in Africa was considered as “overlooked and undervalued” by the Educational Research Network for Education in Western and Central Africa (ERNWACA) in the mid 90s (Mclure, USAID, 1997). This conclusion is challenged by the states of the art just done in three West African countries (Burkina-Faso, Ghana, and Ivory Coast) and South Africa on 20 years researching on TVSD. The three first documents have been produced by
the ERNWACA Chapters in these countries, in collaboration with NORRAG. The documents will be presented at the ADEA Trienniale to be held in Ouagadougou in February 2012, the theme of which is Promoting critical knowledge, skills and qualifications for sustainable development in Africa: how to design and implement an effective response through education and training systems. It must be noted that it will be the first time that African Ministers of Education and Training (in the larger sense of the term) will sit together in such an assembly, underlining the importance and urgency to deal in an integrated and holistic way with some issues like the role of technical and vocational skills development as an instrument to facilitate the inclusion of youth in society, both socially and economically, as well as sustainable economic development.

Looking at the way educational research has dealt with the field of TVSD over the last 20 years is being used in this paper as an instrument to check whether the institutions, actors, working and financing conditions it implies are today in a survival or a (pre) renaissance situation. Answering the question needs to put educational research in the broader context of social sciences. The 2010 World Social Science Report (WSSR) underlines that “The science institutions in many sub-Saharan countries have been systematically eroded and destroyed over the past three decades through international economic policies as well as by the devastating effects of domestic policies and events....Many people have commented on the lack of indigenous African theories and conceptual models to address the region’s social dynamics and challenges. This is not a new observation. It is clear, however, that this call for theoretical innovation and more sociological imagination is even more relevant in an age of globalization and internationalization, of the continuous decline of key scientific institutions including research centres, societies and journals, in many countries, and of the widespread lack of government support for social sciences research in sub-Saharan Africa” (WSSR, 2010, 67).

Two issues are specifically crucial for social sciences research: “The individualistic research does not have much influence on society and rarely carries much weight.... ‘Consultancy’ social science refers to the widespread practice of academics engaging in consultancy work – mostly for international agencies and governments – to augment their meagre academic salaries. It is most prevalent in specific disciplines such as the health sciences, business studies, ICT, and monitoring and evaluation work, but is still widespread and on the increase” (WSSR, 2010, 65). The above mentioned case studies show clearly that consultancy work is dominant in spite of being often considered as antagonist to autonomy and quality work.

The South African case study provides an interesting perspective articulated with the overall transformation stages of this country’s society since the early 90’s: the author identifies three successive periods for SD research, namely Construction, Early Critique and Deconstruction (L.Powell, 2011). These three “seasons” might apply to the new perspective that ADEA is proposing with TVSD as a larger and more dynamic perspective than TVET, which remains one component of a SD strategy. The issue for researchers and policy makers is then not to keep criticising the limits of TVET but to build a new vision where research is one important instrument for relevant and sustainable decisions. At the same time, the limits and problems of the new SD “model” will have to be progressively identified in order
to move towards a deconstruction/reconstruction stage. Such a process would reflect a different mode of governance of a policy making process, where autonomous (functional and critical) research as well as consultancy and quantitative data collection are needed. In other words, the a priori opposition between consultancy type “research” and fully autonomous research could be less extreme than how it is often presented. That is why researching on the economics and political sociology of consultation in Africa (that is very rare in every field, including education) and connecting the results with the on going works (like the ones by IDRC West Africa) on the designing of some new modes for university research governance could help decision makers as well as academics to relaunch a constructive dialogue.

It is worth noting that these topics were covered during a NORRAG-DSE workshop in 1995 (K.King, L.Buchert, eds, DSE, 1996). 15 years later, a bridge could be built between the debates in this workshop and a new way to look at the same topic with a skills research perspective. It could help us contradict the evaluation made in 1997 by ERNWACA which, otherwise, would conclude that we are at a (dead) end for educational research!

References


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From Prejudice to Prestige: Vocational Education and Training in Ghana, by Chris Gale, City & Guilds Centre for Skills Development, London

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Keywords: Ghana; perceptions; informal and formal training; policy development; opportunities for young people.

Summary: Whilst the vocational training sector in Ghana continues to attract large numbers of young people, it suffers from negative perceptions which impacts on its viability as an educational pathway. With this in mind, CSD and COTVET surveyed the attitudes of key stakeholders to identify the underlying factors driving these poor perceptions.

Education was placed at the centre of Ghana’s economic and social development policies following its independence in 1957 and this was reaffirmed with the implementation of the 1961 Education Act (Akyeampong, 2010). Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) was originally a central part of this development strategy. However, despite a variety of new initiatives and policy directives over the last 50 years, TVET is marginalised within the educational landscape and the sector has consistently struggled to produce the skilled workforce needed to meet the needs of the Ghanaian economy.

Existing research suggests that the sector continues to be constrained by negative perceptions, which portray TVET as a low status, low quality educational pathway (Anamuh-Mensah, 2004). These perceptions have clearly not, however, prevented vocational training from remaining a key route through which young Ghanaians attempt to acquire the skills they need for entry into the labour market. For example, in 2010, The Ministry of Education (2010) recorded 64,156 learners enrolled in formal TVET, and Palmer suggests that this number is dwarfed by those in informal apprenticeships, which account for at least 80% of vocational enrolments (Palmer, 2007).

Given the renewed policy orientation towards vocational training with the establishment of COTVET (Council of Technical Vocational Education and Training) in 2008, there is again an opportunity to create appealing, high-quality routes to work through TVET. Whilst the sector may attract a significant proportion of young people, for COTVET to have the desired impact, there is a need to understand the underlying factors which continue to drive the negative perceptions surrounding TVET in Ghana. With this in mind, CSD and COTVET surveyed the attitudes of key stakeholders, including learners, graduates, employers, trainers, parents and policy makers, towards TVET (from both informal and formal training) to identify the factors driving poor perceptions.

What we found was that many learners echoed these perceptions, often highlighting that people associated their chosen pathway with having failed to make the grades to continue onto Senior High School (SHS). This negative outlook often translated into low expected returns on completion of their training. Parents also often stressed poor returns as a major
issue. This has fuelled a notion that the sector is primarily for those that are unable to afford formal education. Alongside often poor infrastructure and limited resources, this has reinforced a negative stereotype of vocational learners.

The poor prospects when entering into vocational training were exacerbated by the stigma which was attached to a variety of trades. In addition to the negative perceptions outlined above, the interviews highlighted a link between some trades and other anti-social activities. The greatest issue that this presented was that these were often in jobs that had the potential to absorb large numbers of young people. Most notable was a perceived association between hair and beauty and prostitution. A number of existing trainees emphasised that they were warned off the sector because of this association and it has certainly had an impact on the numbers of young people considering the trade as a viable livelihood opportunity.

This negative outlook did not, however, extend to employers or trainers. Employers often articulated the value they placed on vocationally trained graduates and highlighted the key role they play within their organisations.

Despite the relatively positive outlook from employers and trainers, they both emphasised the necessity of basic skills as a foundation for progression. This was a particular issue for those emerging from informal training, in which basic skills provision is often completely absent. Employers also indicated that although they looked favourably on TVET graduates, they were generally not workplace ready upon completion of their studies, particularly in terms of soft skills. This in turn impacted on their willingness to take on vocational graduates full time, instead using them on a contractual basis.

In addition to the shortcomings in basic and soft skills, there was also a general concern about the quality and comparability of training. This limited the recognition of the skills that learners gained upon completion, particularly in the informal sector. What was most notable in this study was a lack of standardisation. Many learners, notably from the informal sector, felt the quality of training that they received was questionable and even suggested that trainers might be keeping some skills to themselves. This was impacting on trainees' confidence to take on work and again their perceived prospects post-training. In contrast, many others, primarily from formal training, felt that they were being well prepared for the labour market and were upbeat about their prospects.

Finally, very few learners had received any sort of careers guidance prior to entering into training and this may have had a negative impact on the expectations of learners, which in turn may account for poor performance and lack of motivation during training. Learners expressed a lack of awareness of what they were entering into when they began training, and simultaneously what they may progress on to do upon completion.

It is clear that the negative perceptions surrounding the sector are not unfounded. These perceptions are being driven by generally poor learning environments and limited prospects for graduates. Employers did, in contrast, indicate their willingness to employ graduates who demonstrate the required skill levels. The report therefore highlights a variety of
possible policy responses to address some of these key inhibiting factors and to improve the alignment between training and the needs and expectations of employers:

- Develop the careers advice and guidance system.
- Expand the policy linkages between the TVET system and small enterprise development.
- Introduce capacity development training for master craftspersons.
- Improve the linkages and dialogue between industry and training.
- Conduct a promotional campaign to improve the perceptions of the sector.

References


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**The Workplace as a Site of Learning: Facilitating Learners’ Motivations and Outcomes**, by


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**Keywords:** Skills for Life (SFL); workplace learning; basic skills; learning outcomes, motivations; learning space.

**Summary:** The study discussed in this contribution aims to explore the extent to which work-based ‘Skills for Life provision’ facilitates employees’ learning outcomes and achievements.

Governments worldwide seek to upgrade the ‘basic skills’ of employees deemed to have low literacy and numeracy, in order to enable their greater productivity and participation in workplace practices. A longitudinal investigation of such interventions in the United Kingdom has examined the effects on employees and on organisations of engaging in basic skills programmes offered in and through the workplace. The research focuses on literacy and numeracy programmes, which have previously been associated with formal provision in educational institution classrooms and more recently have moved into the workplace as a site for delivery.

The perception of the space in which education and training traditionally take place has been going through a process of change. Learning that takes place outside the classroom is as significant as learning that occurs in formal educational settings (Edwards et al, 2006). Different modes of learning such as experiential, community-based and work-based learning have become more prominent in recent years. The latest reforms as well as the demands of the market economy and the “knowledge society” have emphasised that learning may occur in settings other than the classroom, in a range of formal and informal environments, including workplace sites, virtual learning, home or leisure settings. The significance of learning that takes place in settings other than the classroom is emphasised by our research findings, which indicate that learning in the workplace setting provides learners with opportunities to acquire a number of significant work-related skills, including, literacy and numeracy skills. Learners’ spatial associations with their workplaces are often perceived as positive, as they may contrast with their previous negative experiences associated with formal education and training.

Our evidence suggests that the benefits of acquisition of basic skills within the workplace are not restricted to the development of skills to be employed at work only. The research has indicated that participation in the SFL (Skills for Life) training has enabled the employees to develop their confidence and self-assurance in general. There are, for example, positive effects on the learners’ family lives and leisure activities that have been associated with their SFL training as they are able to recontextualise their acquired basic skills in environments other than their workplaces. Although workplace SFL provision aims to boost skills relating to economic productivity and is focused quite narrowly on one spatial environment – the workplace – learners’ motivations are much broader. Our theoretical
and empirical research has helped us to underpin and relate learners’ skills and motivations to a wider range of differing environments. Apart from using their newly acquired skills in the workplace, learners can also recontextualise their skills to other contexts, for example to their family environments.

The key findings suggest that (1) ‘Skills for Life’ workplace provision provides an accessible and convenient opportunity for learning that is also less prone to the more intimidating associations of formal educational environments for learning; and that (2) the workplace as a site of learning has an important effect in boosting learners’ motivations and facilitating learner outcomes in a diverse range of work-related and personal activities within and beyond the work setting.

Although this research focuses primarily on the UK context, the significance of employees’ engagement in workplace literacy has also been explored through a transnational research collaboration (Wolf and Evans, 2011) with contributions from the USA, New Zealand and Canada that emphasise the importance of longer-term developments of literacy proficiency and the need to recognise the interplay of formal and informal literacy learning (ibid). Results are feeding into policy-related inquiries into adult skills and workplace learning in Britain and internationally.

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Access and Approaches to Skills and to Work in a Disabling Economic Environment, by
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Keywords: Palestine Refugees; Community Based Organisations; Micro credit

Summary: United Nations Relief and Works Agency for the Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) established in 1949 is mandated with responding to the needs of the Palestine Refugees until a durable and just solution is arrived at on the Palestine refugee issue. UNRWA through its various initiatives such as establishing and engaging community based organizations for skills development, extension of the Micro credit provision, the multi-skilling and competency based training and linking of these initiatives with the requirements of the youth specifically who had no access to TVET earlier, enhanced the
young workers’ interests for learning and self-directedness thereby providing sustainable livelihoods to a population who are impacted by restrictions on movements and other barriers. 

Prolonged conflicts and shattered economy, negatively impact upon the emotional well being of the youth and their families. Often conflicts also result in long term unemployment and adversely affect the individuals in potential age groups in terms of loss of income and possibility to work. For example prolonged conflict and restrictions in Gaza and West Bank resulted in rapidly deteriorating socio-economic situations of the Palestinian refugees. One in 5 persons in Gaza is between 15 and 24 years of age and 72% of the 15-to-19-year age group and 66% of those aged between 20 and 24 years are unemployed. In West Bank these rates stand at 29% and 34% for the age groups, 15-19 and 20-24 respectively. In Lebanon the Palestine refugees “Poverty rates inside refugee camps (due to restrictions on refugees to work) are estimated at about 40 percent of the population, in comparison with the 7 - 8 percent observed in the poorest Lebanese areas. Tackling issues of unemployment in situations of conflict and post conflict not only requires creating employment opportunities but needs more focus on ensuring appropriate skills development and retraining for self-employment. Thus in United Nations Refugee Works Agency (UNRWA), Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is located under Goal 3 i.e. “A decent standard of living”, and is perceived as essential for reducing poverty and improving employability and economic stability of the Palestine refugee youth.

During prolonged conflict, TVET programmes “could and often should act as a carrier for services that have not traditionally been considered to fall within the scope of TVET.” For establishing and operationalising such a TVET system and provide access to the refugees, UNRWA supported in establishment and engaged the community managed and administered Women’s Programme Centers (WPCs) and Community Based Organisations (CBO’s) in the refugee camps. Various short term vocational and skills development courses of 3-6 months duration are offered through these centers. Research shows that access to know-how and knowledge if conjoined with initial seed money is the most effective way to encourage entrepreneurship and self-employment. Entrepreneurship has thus been a focus of UNRWA in all its TVET provisions. Also, for furthering economic development and creating jobs for the refugees who are vulnerable to economic stress and have no access to formal credit systems UNRWA provides microenterprise credit facility and customized training for business people and entrepreneurs. Also UNRWA managed support from NGOs in facilitating Palestine refugees establishing small and medium sized enterprise. The UNRWA microfinance department supports and supplements TVET in providing “A decent standard of living” to Palestine refugees as it “endeavors to improve the quality of life of small business owners, micro-entrepreneurs and poor households through the provision of credit and other financial service that sustain jobs, decrease unemployment, reduce poverty, economically empower youth and women and provide income generating and asset building opportunities to Palestine refugees.”

TVET provision in situations of prolonged conflict needs to adopt a holistic approach “that seeks to improve livelihoods, promote inclusion in to the world of work and that supports
community and individual agency.” Such an approach involves an integrated framework that facilitates development of both “soft” and “hard” skills among the trainees. In its attempts to improve its effectiveness and efficiency UNRWA TVET often took advantage of global good practices. For example through the introduction of the Competency-Based Training (CBT) approach UNRWA attempted to improve the skills levels of its graduates and their employment prospects. In Gaza, which has been witnessing increasing unemployment rates and little possibility of the children progressing to higher education, UNRWA introduced modular approaches with multi exit and entry points. UNRWA Vocational Training Centres (VTCs) have put in concerted efforts in establishing programs that are more responsive to the local and regional labour markets demands. Such a holistic approach to TVET has been valuable and relevant particularly to the refugees impacted by conflicts and severe economic crisis. UNRWA also supports NGOs and other local agencies in upgrading competences of their employees thereby enabling the development of the sector as a whole. To support placement of students especially in Gaza, UNRWA negotiated with various employers for guaranteed employment to the students successfully completing a six months apprenticeship programme.

Overall, the multi-skilling and competency based training being promoted in the VTCs, involving CBOs and NGOs, the extension of the Micro credit provision and linking of these initiatives with the requirements of the refugee youth specifically who had no access to TVET earlier, enhanced the young refugees’ interests for learning and self-directedness thereby providing sustainable livelihoods to a population who are impacted by restrictions on movements, limited access to services and finances and many other barriers.

Follow-up resources

Education for Employment: Realizing Arab youth potential : International Finance Corporation and Islamic Development Bank, April 2011


Artisan Development in a New Delivery Context: Beautiful Policy, Empirical Experience and Research Realities in South Africa, by Salim Akoojee, Manufacturing & Engineering SETA, Johannesburg

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Keywords: Intermediate level skills development, South African education and training,

Summary: The paper argues that the structural re-positioning of the skills development function into a new merged Ministerial entity will not by itself resolve systemic deficiencies in intermediate level skills (artisan) delivery.

The creation of the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), under a separate Ministry, has incorporated a key element of workplace skill development component in addition to other post-school education and training institutions - Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs). The inclusion of these entities into the new Ministry, formally located in the Department of Labour (DoL), has provided the basis for renewed optimism for synergy in intermediate skills development policy and practice. The success of this entity, and the articulated synergy, within the new Department, are based on its ability to work within other supply-side components. While there is promise of a more co-ordinated response to skills development provisioning, the reality of lurking perils inherited from the previous order are still apparent. This short piece suggests that the positioning of SETAs within the new structure has potential to reap rewards, but will require considerable effort by the central authority in ensuring effective outcomes and that synergy is not achieved by simply changing ministerial location.

One of the key issues which the new Department has been tasked with centres around the numbers of artisans to be trained. This requires a degree of engagement between the two entities in the Department and is likely to test the resolve of the unified structure. The New Growth Path (NGP) (2010) which has broadly been accepted as the national roadmap for social and economic transformation has as its core feature the creation of an additional 5 million jobs by 2020, which, if achieved, is designed to reduce the unemployment by 10% (from around 25% to 15%). An education and skills development component of the plan together with a range of macro-economic targets are expected to support this objective. The NGP was identified to train 50 000 artisans by 2015; increase VC enrolment by a million by 2014 and to open workplaces so that 1.2 million workers are provided certified on-the-job training from 2013 (EDD, 2010). In addition, the Skills Accord (NEDLAC, 2011) signed in July 2011, representing the highest echelons of the tri-partite consultative structure comprising labour business and government, reinforces the growth path objectives. In it, employers - in collaboration with SETAs – have committed to producing 30 000 new artisan learners that will enter training this financial year. This target includes 31% Government sector (Defence, Local Government etc), 13% State Owned Enterprises (SOEs) and the balance of 56% coming from the private sector.
That this goal of artisan development is a key responsibility of the DHET is evidenced in the performance agreement that the Minister has signed with the President. In it, there is a commitment to ‘produce’ at least 10 000 artisans per annum by 2014. Key to the achievement of this objective is the role of SETAs and their engagement with industries and business within their jurisdiction. If the goal of increasing artisans is to be realised, then the role of public vocational colleges in this objective cannot be ignored. Thus if the optimistic objectives of artisan development are to be realised, it will signal the first effective test of the objectives of the synergy as articulated by the Minister for an “…integrated education and training system that is highly articulated, is efficient and produces high success rates.” (Nzimande, 2011). Thus, from a skills development perspective, the effectiveness of the department in harnessing artisan development through the inclusion of the SETAs into its fold represents an important component of the overall goal for synergy. Indeed, the success of increasing the numbers of qualified artisans into the labour market will be a crucial test of its success.

Clearly, the re-configuration of the skills development landscape and re-positioning of certain entities within the same ministry does not by itself respond to the issue of synergy. The reality is that this structural shift has hitherto been less about fundamental change than it has been about transferring control from one ministry to another. It has allowed some degree of engagement. For instance, the new Ministry has attempted some control of SETAs by reviewing governance and selecting chairpersons of the boards. However, the reality is that the success of a structure specifically tasked with sectoral workplace training, rather than achieving national development targets is likely to have limited success. This together with a somewhat fragile vocational college sector means that the delivery context is less than ideal.

Policy-making in post-Apartheid South Africa means that while considerable attention is being paid to getting policy right, the reality of implementation is relegated to the periphery. While policy-fiddling and structural review of entities is clearly necessary, it undermines attention to implementation. While there is optimism for the fruits of policy to be realised, it does mean that the delivery context is back-ended at the expense of the promise of a new policy context. After all, there is still some concern about the targets achieved by the widely touted JIPSA initiative in 2006. Perhaps, the promise of synergy promised by creation of a unified post-school education and training system is yet to succeed.

References


Avenues for Further Research: Exploring the Interplay Between the Instrumental and Subjective Functions of Children’s Schooling in the Global South, by Timothy P. Williams, University of Bath

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Keywords: Instrumental; subjective; skills; education; development; children

Summary: A review of the subjective and instrumental functions of children’s education in the global south.

Children’s education through formal, ‘western-style’ schooling has been enshrined as a social good, a basic right, and pathway for the development of individuals, societies, and nation-states, with some of the harshest criticism reserved for those which fail to provide this most basic and precious right for their young people. Its stated benefits are ubiquitous throughout contemporary development discourse. The causal link between educational attainment, skills acquisition, and individual economic opportunity and, consequently, national economic growth has become an article of faith for many governments, UN agencies and nongovernmental organizations. However, the view of formal education as a straightforward mechanism for economic development has come under increasing scrutiny by critical education scholars who observe a striking disconnect between many of the assumptions of children’s schooling on a global level and the way that children’s education is situated and experienced in relation to culture, history, and political economy. While Amartya Sen and others have argued strongly for education on the basis of the various types of intrinsic and instrumental ‘freedoms’ that it is purported to produce, such broad assertions fail to explain how modern schooling is often experienced as a ‘contradictory resource’ by simultaneously offering freedoms for some while foreclosing opportunities for others. There is a need to critically examine the relationship between children’s schooling, the acquisition of skills, and economic development within different settings in the global south. In particular, future research must further theorize about the relationship between the instrumental and subjective functions of children’s schooling, and the larger national and global forces and how these operate within the lives of young people. For instance, ethnographic research has assessed the ‘goodness of fit’ between skills acquisition in
school, employment opportunities available in a local economy, and the subjectivities produced throughout this process. However, research must focus not only identifying the different types of subjectivities that schooling produces, but also should seek to theorize the interplay of the subjective within a broader scope of the material, social and economic dimensions of children’s lives. In other words, we may seek to ask not only how a particular discourse on schooling may give rise to certain subjectivities, but also seek to understand how these subjectivities interact to affect children’s economic futures, particularly in relation to the type of skills children seek to acquire. A number of studies in the global south have credited education with giving children hope, the ‘capacity to aspire’, and also the production of a “development subjectivity” that places high value on schooling. Further research must continue to explore the links between how such subjectivities may affect instrumental outcomes related to education, skills acquisition, employment, and poverty reduction.

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Eight Modest Proposals for a Strengthened Focus on Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in the Education for All (EFA) Agenda, by Kenneth King, University of Edinburgh and NORRAG

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Keywords: EFA Goal 3; skills & poverty; enabling environment; informal sector skills; school-based TVE; financing.

Summary: These eight proposals derive from several bodies of work on skills development which have been completed in the last 3 years. They seek to extract from them some new ways of thinking about the topic, some priority areas and neglected issues, key topics, as well as data and research needs.

1. Towards a conceptual clarification of skills

Arguably one of the reasons for the lack of progress in the analysis and monitoring of Goal 3 until the GMR 2010 was the uncertainty, both nationally and internationally, about the vague scope of ‘appropriate learning and life-skills programmes’ in the original text of the Dakar World Forum (King and Palmer, 2008). The GMR 2010, for the first time in the series of EFA volumes, changed all that; the focus was now much more on technical and vocational skills and skills development than on life-skills.

2. Skills development for poverty reduction

This has become almost as much of a mantra as skills for productivity, competitiveness and
growth, and it has proved difficult for policy makers and donors to deal effectively with the competing agendas of skills for poverty reduction and skills for growth. There has been insufficient attention particularly, however, to whether the poorest and most marginalized groups in society actually access formal technical and vocational education, or formal vocational training. For the poorest segments, their prior low levels and low quality of formal education negatively affect access to and acquisition of both formal and informal technical and vocational skills (RECOUP, 2011).

3. Technical and vocational education and training and the enabling environment

Skills acquisition is very different from skills utilization, and especially for the poorest who can only access basic education of very low quality. Even for the less poor, in many countries, the teaching and learning of basic literacy and numeracy skills in primary and junior secondary schools are of appalling quality; hence the foundation for later, more specialized vocational skills is very weak. Added to that is the fact that the provision of formal technical and vocational education is often so awful that it constitutes a disabling environment for skills acquisition. But beyond the schools, the productive use of education or of skills in the workplace depends upon there being a dynamic or enabling environment for their utilization, as the World Bank famously pointed out in 1980 (Lockheed et al). Hence there is nothing automatic about the utilization of skills, whether basic literacy or more specialized vocational; they both require supportive local economic environments.

4. Training in the informal or unorganized sector

The supply of training outside the formal economy is widely acknowledged to be the main pathway for skills acquisition and utilization in many countries. And what has been said above about the enabling economic environment applies directly to this sector. Policy makers are now much more aware of the scale of such training, as compared to formal TVE or TVET, and they are attracted by the sheer size of the youth population that is involved in acquiring skills in this part of the private sector. Schemes to formalize what may be called the training side of the informal sector abound, including of the informal apprenticeship system.

5. School-based technical and vocational education

This remains an area of very considerable diversity in different regions, reflecting very different histories and international influences. First of all, the coverage is dramatically different, as the GMR 2010 (p.80) makes only too clear. South Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa and Caribbean (all areas influenced, in large parts, historically by the UK) register very low TVE coverage of total secondary enrolment. Thus, South and West Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, and the Caribbean register 1%, 2% and 2% respectively. On the other hand, East Asia, Latin America and Central Asia total 11%, 10% and 11% respectively. Given that vocational specialization at the secondary stage is increasingly deferred to the upper secondary stage, these sets of figures point to a much lower enrolment than may actually be the case at upper secondary. (See further point 6 below.) Thus China had no less than 43% of its upper secondary school students in vocational schools in 2007, to take just one example (Kuczera
and Field, 2010: 13).

6. Improving the monitoring of low-hanging fruits in relation to TVE, and noting the higher-hanging fruits in vocational training and in the informal sector

TVET information systems, including monitoring and evaluation of TVET supply, demand and financing are often woefully inadequate in most developing countries (King and Palmer, 2008). There are two main biases here: first a bias toward the monitoring of school-based TVE, rather than formal or informal vocational training, including apprenticeships; and second a bias toward the easier-to-collect supply side data. In the short term, supply side data on school- and college-based TVE as reported in the GMRs could certainly be improved.

7. Financing TVE and TVET

Globally, the drive to mobilize finance for TVET is much weaker than efforts to raise resources for academic schooling or higher education; thus, there is no Fast Track Initiative for TVET. There are some obvious reasons for this including the neglect (and conceptual confusion) of EFA Goal 3, the perceived difficulty of engaging in this area, and frustration with earlier attempts to finance TVET. Paradoxically, TVET has risen much higher up the agendas of both developing country and donor governments – but this is yet to really transform into noticeable shifts in funding.

8. Identifying the situation of the poorest young people in the global politics of skill development

In many countries, including most of South Asia, the reason that there are so few young people in school-based TVE or TVET institutions outside the school is that the main system for securing skills is through taking on young people as casual labour, and gradually selecting from these, after periods of low or no wage, those who can work with the mistris, or masters, formed by the same system. In other words, behind the figures of 80 to 90% of new jobs being in the informal, unorganized sector of the economy, there may be several skill development systems operating, including the massive system of skills-via-casual-labour.

Several of the countries of South Asia currently have the largest plans in their history for the expansion of their skilled labour force, including profiting from what India terms the ‘demographic dividend’ of having much larger numbers of young people (admittedly still unskilled) than China, or other Western or Eastern countries. Bangladesh, Pakistan and India all also intend to profit, through remittances, from the planned expansion of millions of migrant labourers. Currently, half of such migrant labour is unskilled, in the case of Bangladesh, and it is expected that with pre-migration up-skilling, the return will be much greater.

These traditions of millions of young people seeking to acquire skills through casual labour, and through internal and international migration are not only applicable to South Asia, but
are also present in Latin America, as can be seen from accounts of the informal, casual work available to youth with the lowest levels of education in that region. With such young people in mind, it will be important to get behind the rhetoric of skills for poverty reduction and growth, and of more demand-led approaches, to recognize how particular cultures and traditions of work are already deeply affecting the poorest and most vulnerable young people.

[An earlier fuller version of this paper is available on the EFA GMR 2012 site: http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/ED/pdf/gmr2012-ED-EFA-MRT-PI-06.pdf]

References


Key Issues and Research Challenges for TVET: Bridging the gap between TVET research and the needs of policy makers, by Rupert Maclean, The Hong Kong Institute for Education

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Keywords: TVET research; decision making in TVET; types of TVET research

Summary: An opinion that much TVET policy making is not based on research based evidence. The reasons why this is the case and what can be done to address this problem.

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), and skills development for employability and sustainable livelihoods, have been identified by UNESCO Member States as a major and growing priority within UNESCO’s range of programme activities. This is to be expected since there is overwhelming evidence to demonstrate that TVET can play an essential role in promoting economic growth and the socio-economic development of countries, with benefits for individuals, their families, local communities and society in general. Improving education for the world of work can help raise the incomes of poverty-stricken farmers, provide citizens with more choices in their lives, help alleviate poverty and empower individuals who would otherwise be marginalized. TVET is fundamental to the building of orderly and compassionate civil societies, peace building and to the promotion of justice and fairness.

Given the great importance of TVET it is disappointing that so much government policy-making in the area of TVET continues to be largely based more on intuition and folklore than on rigorous and reliable, research-based evidence. This is despite the fact that TVET research is by now an internationally established element of educational research.

It is widely accepted that educational research has the potential to play an important role in TVET policy formulation and decision making, aimed at improving skills development for employability, since “it is the tool which enables policy makers to determine national educational needs, to assess new approaches to resolving issues, and to evaluate the effectiveness of (TVET) policies and strategies” (ADB, 1996, p. 1.) Yet many TVET decision makers do not use research as much as they could and do not actively seek it out, thereby largely neglecting or overlooking the opportunity for better policy and decision making that research findings can provide.

Despite the potential of educational research to making an important, some would say essential, contribution to decision making in TVET, many researchers complain that education decision makers pay insufficient attention to research findings. Policy makers and implementers, on the other hand, argue that much of the available TVET research is unintelligible and lacking in relevance for TVET decision-making purposes. Examples of where educational research could usefully inform decision makers include monitoring the health of TVET systems, investigating options for reform and change, evaluating intended and unintended outcomes of interventions and the provision of assessment strategies...
which focus on performance and competency-based student learning in TVET which emphasizes the quality of leaning.

When considering the relationship between research and decision making in TVET, it is important to recognize that there is not one, but many different types of TVET research. These range from reviews of the research literature which present an overview of the research done by others on a particular matter (such as the influence of socio-economic status or gender on access to TVET and educational outcomes) to sophisticated and detailed research studies which examine key questions in great depth (such as the impact of particular TVET teaching methods on the development of convergent contrasted with divergent thinking in a group of students).

TVET research may serve many different functions, besides informing those who make educational decisions about TVET provision and the content of programmes. Some academic research in universities, for example, may be undertaken for no other reason than that it reflects the particular interests and inquisitiveness of the researcher involved. In addition, TVET researchers work in very different types of work settings, such as universities, research units in government departments, in independent or semi-independent research units, and in the corporate sector.

David Wilson’s and my six volume International Handbook of Education for the Changing World of Work: Bridging Academic and Vocational Learning, is an attempt to improve the interface and dialogue between research, policy and practice in the area of TVET, while the Handbook of Technical and Vocational Education and Training Research, edited by Felix Rauner and myself, is an attempt to provide a comprehensive overview of TVET research internationally, to indicate the gaps and shortfalls, as well as the strengths, of TVET research to date.

In conclusion it may be said that educational research has the potential to make an important contribution to policy formulation and analysis in TVET. However, there appears to be at the current time a strong feeling amongst many TVET decision-makers and administrators that TVET research has a long way to go before it reaches its full potential. In order to improve the current situation, there is a need for all parties concerned to examine critically the relationship between research and policy-making in TVET with a view to identifying constructive and realistic ways in which policy makers and researchers in the area of TVET can work together more effectively.

References


In Favour of Professional, Technical and Vocational Training (PTVT) – but Not at Education’s Expense, by Mike Douse, consultant, Brecon, Wales

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**Keywords:** Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET); Professional Training; TVET and Education; PTVT.

**Summary:** Imaginative and effective Professional, Technical and Vocational Training (PTVT) is ardently advocated, just as the encroachment of explicit employment preparation and the world of work’s practices and values upon general education or schooling is strenuously opposed.

The world changes. We try to identify the trends, avoid the looting and the riots and the retributive aftermath, and predict at least some parts of some futures. In the wake of our limited understandings, so-called TVET – by fits and starts – evolves.

We should train for those futures. Instead we train, at best, for the vaguely perceived, politically mediated presents and, all too frequently, for the erroneously recollected pasts.

Capacity development should be for the individual, the immediate community and the society. All too frequently it is for the human resource unit, the corporate body and the formal economy.

We exchange ideas and evidence and genuinely strive to learn from one another – especially if the fruits of that expert-level intercourse will bring us personal credit – handicapped all the while by our belief that schemes which worked in Oxford will now work in Omdurman.

We are all especially enthusiastic and uniquely uncritical about our own initiatives (‘the TVET innovator as hero’) but less so about re-applying those schemes of others, allegedly proven efficacious elsewhere and elsewhere, by those whom we do not know – mainstreaming is consequently much less effective than piloting.

The objectives and indicators for (and hence the evaluation of) major so-called TVET and skills development programmes should, at the super-goals and overall objectives levels, extend to their measurable contribution to poverty reduction and social justice.
Any vision for vocational preparation must be grounded upon the realisation that paid and otherwise rewarding work will be in increasingly short supply and that, for the very many, the income-generating future will be characterised by spasmodic bursts of insecure, often part-time and typically low-remunerated (self-)employment.

Give a man a fish and he may feed his family for an evening. Teach a man to fish and he may obliterate his age-old eco-system.

It is surprising that some of the heartiest advocates of so-called TVET simultaneously endorse qualification frameworks which require, say, a highly skilled plumber to obtain a university degree in medieval history in order to advance any further up the ladder.

The ‘ladder’ is a medieval deception.

Schooling is widely perceived as a route away from unskilled primary production (“I am too educated to do the job my parents did”) and, consequently, agricultural skills development is inhibited in its utility as a means of poverty alleviation.

The poor status of TVET is a major universal problem. It may best be overcome by conceptualising and organising all work-related training and preparation (internships, BTEC professional awards, seminars in management, apprenticeships, medical degrees, shop-floor work-experience, bar examination preparation et cetera) as elements within a unitary policy and administrative framework. Hence PTVT (Professional, Technical and Vocational Training).

PTVT should embrace a constructive critique of the world of work including its assumptions and the power relationships within it; the importance of professional associations and trades unions as guardians of standards and campaigners for equity should be emphasised, as should skills in workers’ rights advocacy and practical capacities in various forms of industrial action.

Many youngsters reject schooling and keep on asking ‘why should I learn this?’ The temptation to ‘sugar coat’ the pill of compulsion with the saccharine of relevance should be resisted. Given that most work for most workers worldwide will be tedious, exploitative and soul-destroying, those designing and delivering education would be well-advised to steer as far away from it as possible.

‘Vocational Education’ and ‘Education-for-Employment (e4e)’ are self-contradictory oxymorons [the redundancy is for emphasis and deliberate].

Although plumbers, carpenters, electricians and suchlike are in short supply, and thus earning good money, there is a tendency for students and their parents to give higher preference and esteem to university degrees, often in traditional and ‘ivory tower’ subjects. This tendency is to be welcomed as an admirable recognition of the principle that education should not be in thrall to employment.
No child should leave school without basic skills – a love of learning, a respect for knowledge, a desire for wisdom, a critical fluency with contemporary technology, the ability to remain creatively human when unemployed, a fascination with that which is difficult, a unique set of enthusiasms stimulated and underwritten by education. Then and only then may PTVT commence.

Some suggest that schooling is mainly about getting a ‘good job’. As most school-leavers worldwide will fail to get ‘good jobs’, then who should be regarded as the failures: the school-leavers themselves, their underpaid and powerless teachers, or those who propagated those falsehoods in the first place?

Education should be about being, not becoming. Given that life itself should be as pleasant as possible, education should be enjoyable – characterised by laughter rather than sorrow, by joyous self-discovery rather than over-disciplined and competitive homogeneity. As an end in itself, education should be fun.

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