

PAPER 9

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*Reforming Training
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INTRODUCTION

This tenth Working Group meeting was made possible by the continued support of SDC to its secretariat. However, this particular meeting would not have been possible without the kind invitation of both the International Training Centre of the ILO and the European Training Foundation. The Working Group thanks Fred Fluitman and Frans Lenglet from ITC-ILO and Muriel Dunbar and Peter Grootings from ETF for their hospitality and for facilitating the meeting.

The focus of the meeting reflected our visit to two centres, with one part of the discussions addressing the challenge of skills development in North Africa, the Middle East and Central Asia (hosted by ETF) and the second addressing issues of capacity development within agencies (hosted by ITC-ILO).

The meeting was organised by the Secretariat under the leadership of Michel Carton and was chaired by Kenneth King. In keeping with the dual focus of the deliberations, the discussion paper is jointly authored by Simon McGrath and Rob Palmer.

In connection with section two of the paper, a review of current programmes of specialised training in the field of skills development, authored by Frédérique Weyer, is available on the Working Group website.

SECTION ONE: SKILLS DEVELOPMENT FOR THE KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

1.1. SKILLS DEVELOPMENT FOR THE KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT: A REFLECTION ON RESEARCH IN THE MIDDLE EAST/NORTH AFRICA AND CENTRAL ASIA.

Robert Palmer

1.1.1. Introduction

Education and skills development in transition economies and those in the Middle East and North Africa are different from in developing countries in a number of ways. First, these countries have a more extended basic and secondary education system, and often a very extended vocational education and training (VET) system. Second, the extended education system and educational gains, without parallel gains in formal employment creation, results in large cohorts of relatively well-educated graduates entering the labour market, and largely ending up in the informal economy. This pattern of labour market transition is illustrated by recent research on the Middle East and North Africa (MENA)¹ and Central Asia.²

1.1.2. Skills development and the knowledge economy: a role for informal skills training?

1.1.2.1. From the informal economy to the knowledge economy

Since the 1998 World Development Report, *Knowledge For Development*, the knowledge economy has been seen as being developed in part through secondary and tertiary education.

But what of the relationship between the knowledge economy and the informal economy? How does training in or for the informal economy contribute to the development of this knowledge economy?

The MENA research, reported later in this paper, attempts to answer these questions by situating skills development in the informal economy within the current efforts of most countries in the region to integrate into world markets. The MENA study is concerned with the large numbers of school drop outs that leave basic education before they have acquired enough skills to operate in the knowledge economy. It is, however, also concerned with the increasing number of basic and secondary graduates who ultimately end up in the informal economy as not enough formal employment exists.

¹ See: Amin, G. Carrero, E. and Hakim, L. (forthcoming) Integrating TVET into the Knowledge Economy: Reform and Challenges in the Middle East and North Africa. European Training Foundation / World Bank.

² See: Branco, E. (forthcoming) Training Strategies for Local Development in Kazakhstan, Kyrgystan and Uzbekistan. European Training Foundation; and Morel, C. (2004) Skills Development Strategies For Local Development in the Context of Poverty Alleviation in Central Asia. ETF.

1.1.2.2. Traditional apprenticeship training

Faced with globalisation, people generally do not choose to enter into informal economy training out of choice but, instead, see it as some form of safety net, a way of getting training when there are no other options available.

Traditional apprenticeship training (TAT), as the MENA report notes, is beset with limitations (perpetuation of traditional practices, lack of innovation and knowledge transfer, etc.), which would seem to hinder its usefulness as a training mechanism for the knowledge economy and global competitive markets. While there is a fair degree of interaction between formal and informal economy (and vice-versa), most transactions in the informal economy are still internal to it. Moreover, because of limitations of training and market demand, the products of the informal economy are generally cheaper and not up to a standard needed for either the formal economy or exportation. Moreover, TAT that promotes perpetuation of traditional practices results in a pool of labour unsuited to the global competitive economy and technological advances. The oft-stated example of informally trained mechanics not being able to repair modern vehicles because of technological advances in engine design is relevant here.

Whilst traditional apprenticeship training is widespread in the MENA region, it is not as common in Central Asia. However, it is growing in importance in countries like Uzbekistan. As we shall see below, the CA research favours a focus on “local development” rather than the relationship between the informal and knowledge economies.

1.1.2.3. Interventions and the informal economy

So how might interventions be made in informal sector training that can facilitate integration into world markets? The key problem of any intervention in the informal economy relates to the continued lack of clarity regarding the nature of the informal economy. This results in problems for intervention. If the informal economy is treated as a homogenous entity, it is almost impossible to design a “one-size-fits-all” intervention that can allow for all the diverse needs within the informal economy. It is more common now to recognise its heterogeneous nature, with the obvious implication that needs are different for different groups within it.

As noted, much informal sector training is beset with limitations that do not make for useful knowledge economy workers. However, it must not be forgotten that a small number of the more dynamic enterprises and entrepreneurs utilise “modern” technology, for example in internet cafes or mobile phone call centres operating in the informal economy, with training that is very relevant to the knowledge economy.

The MENA research looked at interventions in traditional apprenticeship training, like the dual training in Tunisia, that aim to make the informal economy more competitive and ultimately, part of the formal system.

The research found that the training systems were dominated by the state. However, such a finding depends on how “training” and “systems” are defined. Indeed, there was little discussion about the “hidden training worlds” in both the private and non-governmental sectors: there are many more training providers than the state, and these comprise NGO actors as well as private for profit, including back street colleges and enterprise based training.

Despite the identification of the “high” and “low” ends of the informal economy in the study, the interventions discussed in the MENA research were obviously aimed at the more dynamic, largely manufacturing, segment. Indeed the strategy outlined was for the higher end to be linked with export orientated industries in order to allow it to exploit certain niches. However, this leaves unanswered the question of what to do about skills interventions for the more subsistence part of the informal economy.

1.1.3. Skills development and local development

1.1.3.1. What is local development?

“Local development aims at enhancing employment opportunities, increasing incomes and improving quality of life through long-term sustainable development” (Morel 2004: 4). Local development refers to integrated, bottom-up development that enables synergies between different projects and schemes to materialise at the local level. The strength of local development is meant to arise from the active involvement and participation of grassroots community groups, both in problem identification and project design. Emphasis is placed on partnerships between community groups and other stakeholders such as NGOs.

1.1.3.2. Whose local development?

The Central Asia report by the European Training Foundation notes that the usual targets of local development are the “most vulnerable layers of the population”. It warns that these groups are often not represented in the groups consulted about education and training reform policies. Hence, it recommends that representatives of such groups should be included in discussion. However, just as the report notes that NGOs should not be treated as representatives of the poor, it should also not be assumed that the community-based representatives will in fact be representative of the poor. Community-based representatives may well be the more active, vocal, and perhaps more wealthy and powerful members of the community.

The Central Asia report notes that civil society organisations are often the driving force behind local development initiatives. It further notes that the agendas of local NGOs tend to be more shaped by donor priorities than local priorities. One might then ask, whose local development is this? Despite donor rhetoric of partnership and local ownership, in practice this often only means local ownership of projects approved and funded by donors (through NGOs). Those local development initiatives that do not fit with donor priorities may well receive less attention.

1.1.3.3. Skills development for local development

Local development addresses an integrated framework that situates training for the poor within the wider framework of other development measures taken to combat poverty. Training in a local development context takes different forms (formal but mostly non-formal) and aims at providing technical (usually at a low level of technology) and business skills for wage- or self-employment.

In Central Asia, skills development has different objectives depending on the overall objectives of the community-driven projects:

- skills development can be used for institution building and development at the project's outset;
- it is a way to increase self-confidence, involvement in community issues and ultimately the possibility to find a job;
- it is also a way to grasp community potential and incite people to be more autonomous in making decisions and solving their own problems within a group approach;
- skills development is useful to build human capital through the development of professional skills; and
- it helps in reorienting people towards new economic activities and disclosing entrepreneurship potential and perspectives.

The types of skills most commonly found in local development initiatives in Central Asia are in the following areas: agriculture, agro-business, entrepreneurship, livestock production, water management, off-farm rural economy, technical skills and advocacy.

Morel notes that “skills development in itself does not create employment. However, if properly associated to other local development tools (such as micro-credit, rehabilitation of social and rural infrastructure, access to water, maintenance of irrigation and drainage systems, production and marketing of local products, improvement of income generation potential, environment protection) it can be a powerful tool of income generation” (Morel 2004: 11). This notion that skills development requires an enabling environment fits well with findings from the World Bank’s (2004) *Skills Development in Sub-Saharan Africa* research. The Central Asia research noted that, in Uzbekistan, those projects that had adopted training as part of an integrated approach were more successful than those where training was a stand-alone intervention.

However, the real question is how can the required enabling system be created, in specific country contexts. For example, it is clear that to produce extension officers, for micro-enterprise business development services, micro-credit officers or agricultural officers, higher education is required. The links between skills development and other sub-sectors of post-basic education and training can then be explored, in which education and training is seen as a system within a wider framework of enabling support.

1.1.4. Context and diversity

1.1.4.1. How similar are informal economies and is it worthwhile making generalisations?

Studies based on multiple country studies that examine issues connected with the informal economy are naturally prone to generalisation. However, the issue is not simply whether a few countries can be representative of a whole region? The intention is to generate key findings from country case studies that may be of value in understanding other country contexts. In the case of the research from the MENA region, for example, the authors were

able to identify five critical challenges for vocational training reform in the region: governance of training systems; financing of training; quality of training systems; skills development in the informal sector; participation of the private sector and social partners in training system management and provision.

Nonetheless, the description of “a standard informal economy” in the report is strikingly similar to that in the World Bank’s Sub-Saharan Africa study. Does this mean that these characteristics are generalisable across both regions or does it imply that an over-generalised picture is being constructed that is not sufficiently reflective of national complexities. If the latter is the case, then there is a danger that such studies will have limited value for policy and programme purposes.

1.1.5. The policy challenge

The policy challenge relating to skills development for the knowledge economy and local development includes: where to start TVET reform agenda; enforcing policy decisions; scaling up “good practice”; ensuring the sustainability of “good practice”; and the difficulty caused by higher educational levels amongst apprentices. I shall treat each of these in turn.

1.1.5.1. Where does the TVET reform agenda start?

The complexity of reform of TVET compared to education is apparent. Given the diversity of TVET providers in most countries, it will be difficult to bring all the partners together for a TVET reform. Thus, sequencing and prioritisation are crucial.

Public TVET institutions have traditionally been slow at responding to market demand, providing skills and training largely focused on a formal employment outcome even in countries where most new jobs are created in the informal economy. It would be difficult to change the role of formal public VET and bring reform to these systems. First, it should be remembered that in many countries public formal training is in crisis anyway (crisis of quality, of relevance, of equity and of access). Second, the different types of training required for formal or informal employment make it very difficult for a public training centre to simultaneously act as a provider of both.

Private training providers, including informal traditional apprenticeships, enterprise-based training, NGO training and private institutions are generally more responsive to market demand and offer more flexible training modalities. Where there is a call for more public-private partnerships to be formed, how might this be facilitated? How successful will donor harmonisation be in the context of TVET reform?

The Central Asian research highlighted the value of bottom-up reform. However, the challenge remains of how to combine this positive bottom-up development with top-down reform measures.

1.1.5.2. What about enforcement?

When informal apprenticeships are formalised through such things as apprenticeship contracts, minimum wage remuneration and minimum age for apprentices, as is being attempted in the Tunisian case, the obvious question is who will enforce this and what capacity exists for this to be done.

1.1.5.3. Scaling up: how do we scale up intervention?

Targeted interventions in the informal economy are usually of limited geographical spread, given its vast and heterogeneous nature. Interventions in traditional apprenticeship training typically only cover a fraction of the total apprenticeship population. In the Tunisian case, only 12 000 of an estimated 100 000 apprentices were being reached. While good examples from around the world do exist, it is important to address how these can be scaled up.

1.1.5.4. Sustainability

If there is considerable reliance on NGOs as change agents, an approach favoured in both papers, there are likely to be important issues surrounding sustainability and local capacity development. First, if training interventions are funded externally, as both reports suggest, there may be serious issues of long-term sustainability if the funders' priorities shift and they pull out. Second, use of NGOs does not mean that interventions are necessarily grounded in local communities and made sustainable through community commitment and resources.

1.1.5.5. Educated apprentices

The new generation of entrants into the informal economies of the MENA region will typically have more formal education than past generations. While this may assist their integration into the knowledge economy, it does bring problems. The skills transmission process between poorly educated "masters" and better-educated apprentices is likely to be put under strain.

With little to no schooling of their own and having learned the profession from someone else with no schooling, most informal sector producers can be expected to train their schooled apprentice in the same techniques of "aesthetic" production and repairs and the same "compensation" strategies which they acquired as apprentices and which they still employ.³ The resultant need to upgrade the skills and knowledge of the master craftsmen has been recognised in a number of interventions internationally.

³ Muskin 1997

1.1.6. The research challenge

Several issues emerge from the MENA and CA research that would be important to follow up with further research. These relate to:

- contextualising the informal sector;
- informal sector resistance;
- outcomes of interventions;
- existing local organisations;
- methodological issues;
- skills development and poverty reduction; and
- skills development and AIDS.

1.1.6.1. Contextualising the informal sector

Further research would be needed to place the general findings of the research in specific country context and to fully understand the development of the informal economy in each country.

1.1.6.2. Informal sector resistance

Research might look at the resistance of the informal economy enterprises to intervention and formalisation. If enterprises deliberately choose to operate informally, perhaps to avoid paying tax or registration fees, it is necessary to consider what incentive they have for formalising.

1.1.6.3. Outcomes of interventions

Research would be needed to establish the outcomes of interventions. For example, what happens to the graduates of the dual training system in Tunisia?

1.1.6.4. Existing local organisations

With respect to promoting local development, it is crucial to understand existing local organisations and mechanisms, such as self-help groups, informal finance associations, funeral clubs or informal insurance organisations, and their relationship with the state. The state may see such organisations as threats to its power; as possible targets for cooption and conduits for patronage; or as attractive partners. This will differ from context to context but is crucial to any planned intervention.

1.1.6.5. Methodological issues

Follow-up research to establish the relevance of the main findings to local stakeholders, including informal enterprises, community groups and local/national governments in each of the respective countries would be useful. At present it is not clear in what ways the conclusions reflect the views of the stakeholders themselves.

1.1.6.6. Skills development and poverty reduction

It was noted in the WGICSD paper 7 that the underlying assumption of the skills development agenda: that skills training leads to economic growth and poverty reduction, needs to be further explored. Indeed, this working assumption is not based on much research information. Reasons why informal sector workers need training seem clear (training increases productivity, quality, diversity and occupational safety and health; even if workers say that they do not need skills), but the capacity of the informal economy to articulate these needs is unclear.

Neither the Millennium Development Goals nor many Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) mention skills development. Hence, there is too little focus on skills development needs for development. Policy makers should start to recognise the synergies between skills development and other areas, such as education. Furthermore, those agencies that are committed to achieving the MDGs might want to look at the ways formal and informal skills development can contribute to achieving these goals.

1.1.6.7. AIDS and informal sector

AIDS is deskilling the population of many countries at an often-alarming rate. Research looking at the effect of AIDS on skills development in specific country contexts is needed.

1.2. SKILLS DEVELOPMENT FOR THE KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA: THE ROLE OF THE INFORMAL SECTOR IN SKILLS ACQUISITION

Elena Carrero, European Training Foundation; Luis Guillermo Hakim, World Bank; Ghada Amin, Egypt

1.2.1. Introduction

Having successfully expanded school coverage to unprecedented levels, countries in the Middle East and North Africa are turning their attention to improving the quality and relevance of learning opportunities for their citizens. There are too many citizens in the region who do not complete basic education, or who do not have access to quality learning opportunities, and thus are ill prepared for the challenges of what are hoped increasingly to become knowledge-based societies. These shortcomings in turn limit the growth potential of the region's countries with serious implications for their participation in global markets, job growth, poverty alleviation and social stability. The role of technical and vocational education and training (TVET)⁴ in the provision of quality and relevant learning opportunities is explored in this joint study by the European Training Foundation (ETF) and the World Bank. It examines five critical challenges for vocational training reform in the Mediterranean region:

- governance of training systems;
- financing of training;
- quality of training systems;
- skills development in the informal sector; and
- participation of the private sector and social partners in training system management and provision.

The report's objective is to provide quality analytical information at regional level on key issues for vocational training reform not sufficiently targeted to date. The full report is based on country reviews for Lebanon, Egypt, Tunisia and Jordan and will be shortly available from ETF and the World Bank.

The main conclusions of the report are:

- there is the need to refocus the role of TVET in the region as an instrument of the knowledge economy (new articulation with the education system, pathways, quality);
- real participation of social partners needs to be enhanced (new balances of roles, partnerships public/private). VET is currently dominated by public sector, but there is a need to bring in more social partners in training, management and delivery;

⁴ TVET covers various institutional arrangements, from vocational streams in basic and secondary schools to post-secondary institutions.

- public (quality) provision of training needs accountability and decentralisation;
- meeting the challenges of improved relevance, quality and life long learning requires diversifying sources of funding and setting up new funding mechanisms;
- important quality innovations are taking place, but they need a larger context for the reform;
- building capacity for the participation of the private sector in the delivery of training is needed; and
- learning opportunities need to be developed for informal workers (partnerships between governments and NGOs).

1.2.2. Informal employment in the Middle East and North Africa

Informal sector employment is today the most important source of jobs for new entrants to the labour force in the region. In Egypt, 70 percent of new workers start in the informal sector. In Lebanon, about 25 percent of the labour force work in the informal sector, and in Tunisia, about 40 percent of the non-agricultural workers are in this sector.

Informal employment occurs in both the formal and informal sectors. The latter is mainly comprised of informal micro-enterprises (non-agricultural, self-employment activities and tiny enterprises). These are characterised by their: tiny scale of operations, use of labour intensive technologies, traditional forms of organisation and weak position in markets. But the informal sector is also seen as a highly heterogeneous collection of businesses, ranging from the more dynamic enterprises at the “high” end, to the more subsistence orientated enterprises at the “low” end.

Despite significant progress in enrolments in basic education in the last two decades, large inefficiencies in basic education remain, with high repetition and drop-out rates. In Tunisia for example, only 39 percent of the 1989 cohort completed 9 years of basic education, and 21 percent completed secondary education. Dropouts from basic education enter the labour market at a young age and with low levels of education. For most of them the entry point to the labour market is through traditional apprenticeships in the informal sector. Here skills are narrowly defined and acquired on the job, with emphasis on specific skills rather than general skills. The need to upgrade skills is not evident among informal sector workers; training mostly happens during initial stages of employment with limited opportunities for lifelong learning.

1.2.3. Traditional apprenticeships

Despite the existence of large formal VET in the region, traditional apprenticeships are a major source of skills acquisition in the informal sector, although they tend to suffer from a male bias. Apprentices work with no contracts and they pay for the cost of training, either directly in cash, or indirectly under the form of reduced wages. The average duration of apprenticeship is between 4 and 8 years, as the apprentice progresses from *sabby* (helper), to *mousad* (semi-skilled worker), and finally to *sanaaey* (skilled worker). There are no training

programmes, curricula or duration of training pre-established. Moreover, there is no certification or other written proof of acquired competencies.

Interviews conducted as part of the research noted that both masters and apprentices saw traditional apprenticeships as being more effective in providing the youth with skills than formal training institutions. Apprenticeships are seen to provide more diversified and practical training that translates into more versatile workers. Being exposed to various aspects of running a business, combined with making contacts with suppliers and clients are seen as useful if the apprentice decides to start their own business.

However, shortcomings of apprenticeships include:

- the exploitation of young workers as cheap labour;
- sometimes partial knowledge of skills transfer from master to apprentice out of fear of competition;
- limited knowledge transfer as a result of predominance of traditional technologies, lack of innovation and lack of theoretical content;
- the mobility among apprentices is high, increasing the reluctance of business owners to invest in apprentices; and
- the transition from apprentice to semi-skilled worker takes a considerable amount of time.

A younger generation of informal sector apprentices tend to be better educated, and sometimes trained in a formal training institution.

1.2.4. Government responses

From the four countries in the study, only Tunisia has developed initiatives to support traditional apprenticeships. Since 1993, Tunisia has implemented a set of policies designed to improve the functioning of informal sector apprenticeships, for example:

- introduction of compulsory apprenticeship contracts;
- setting the level of apprentice remuneration, gradually rising from 30 to 60-80 percent of the legislated minimum wage;
- exemption to the employer for the payment of social security for apprentices;
- compulsory accident insurance for apprentices;
- minimum age for apprentices raised from 18 to 20 years of age; and
- duration of apprenticeship training (from 11 months to 3 years).

In 1996, the Tunisian national agency for training (ATFP) started to develop compulsory “dual” training, where apprentices attended training in literacy, numeracy and other skills for

two days a week, in addition to learning practical skills on the job. Prospective interested youth interested sign up with the employment office, which places the client with an appropriate apprenticeship centre (CFA). Apprenticeship counsellors at the CFA then match the applicant with interested employers (mostly small workshops). Upon acceptance of the client by the employer, a contract is arranged, detailing: i) duration and remuneration; ii) the right/duty of the apprentice to benefit from dual training; and iii) the role of the counsellor as an advisor to the apprentice and to monitor his/her progress.

Of the estimated 100 000 trainees in traditional apprenticeships in Tunisia, about 45 000 have registered for an apprenticeship contract with ATFP. However, of those who have registered, ATFP has the capacity to follow up only 12 000 apprentices. Various reasons explain the low coverage, including:

- inadequate facilities to absorb the apprentices;
- lack of specialised instructors;
- low motivation of apprentices to follow complementary training;
- lack of interest on the part of the firms; and
- long distances from the place of work to the learning centre.

Possible risks of making informal apprenticeships formal include:

- undermining the traditional supremacy of the workshop owner may reduce their interest in participating in the system;
- the bureaucratisation of the apprenticeship system, illustrated by counsellors being more interested in administrative matters and recording progress of training activities; and
- the gender bias against female candidates.

1.2.5. NGOs and skills development

NGOs play an increasing role in providing learning opportunities by providing skills to school dropouts, disadvantaged groups, and the poor. The role of NGOs can be grouped into three main types of services: (i) support for traditional apprenticeships in the informal sector, (ii) training as part of a larger package of services to vulnerable populations, generally linked to micro-credit programmes, and (iii) direct provision of training services to school dropouts.

In Egypt, NGOs are involved in training for the informal sector, in three different ways:

1. a large group conducts training within the Productive Families Programme (a government initiative).
2. A number of larger NGOs have set up similar training programmes for women engaged in income-generating activities to complement their micro-credit operations.

3. A few NGOs have entered into innovative schemes to build on, and improve traditional apprenticeship training.

The Productive Families Programme (PFP) in Egypt is a government and donor funded programme, implemented by NGOs, with the aim of stimulating human development among the poor and creating job opportunities in family enterprises through an integrated approach. Training occurs in the 3 500 government and NGO training centres in the country. Small loans, technical advice and marketing assistance are offered to trainees. In 2002, 49 138 persons received training under the PFP. Since the start of the PFP in 1964, US\$12 million has been disbursed in micro-credit and 1,3 million clients have benefited from the scheme (70% of which are female). However, reviews of the scheme suggest that inefficiencies exist in implementation.

Other NGOs in Egypt, have designed interventions in support of traditional apprenticeships. They try to provide training within an integrated approach (apprenticeship training, business management training, small loans). The scheme uses enterprise-based training in private workshops, which facilitates demand driven training. Both apprenticeship candidates and workshop owners are carefully screened by the NGOs. Candidates have to demonstrate genuine training and employment interests as well as other personal attributes. Workshop owners have to have a good reputation, teaching qualities and enough equipment. Following a three day seminar, where the candidate selects the trade they wish to pursue, a one week probation occurs with the candidate being trained by an identified workshop. After this period a contract is signed between the NGO, the apprentice and the workshop owner that stipulates training objectives, duration (3-6 months) and training content.

Apprentices receive an incentive allowance of about US\$1 per day, while the workshop owners receive US\$180 subsidy for 3-6 months' training. Following the training, a test is usually conducted in another workshop, after which the NGO issues a certificate and assists with job-placement and start up services. Each NGO trains about 800 apprentices a year at a cost of US\$140-300 per apprentice, depending on the trade. This cost does not include administrative costs incurred by the NGO, of which apprentices have to pay 15%. NGO project staff believe that skills acquisition under this scheme is equivalent to skills gained in 5 to 7 years of traditional apprenticeship.

1.2.7. Conclusion

The study concludes that traditional apprenticeships are a tool to fight social exclusion for dropouts from basic education. However, the skills acquired by apprentices are limited to specific skills in traditional technologies with limited opportunities for life long learning. In addition, efforts are needed to help students complete basic education. Innovative approaches to improve traditional apprenticeships include dual training to provide some basic skills like literacy and numeracy. Training contracts help the apprentices to train with a clear set of objectives and programmes; it also helps employers in terms of reducing the mobility of apprentices. Nonetheless, efforts to modernise traditional apprenticeships are still limited.

1.3. TRAINING STRATEGIES FOR LOCAL DEVELOPMENT IN CENTRAL ASIA: BASED ON STUDIES IN KAZAKHSTAN, KYRGYSTAN AND UZBEKISTAN

Eduarda Castel Branco, European Training Foundation

1.3.1. The aims and objectives of the study

The ETF initiated this research to explore the role and strategies of training as used in local development programmes and initiatives in three countries in Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan). The aim was to understand the role, advantages and limitations of various training strategies aimed at the working poor, the informal economy and disadvantaged groups.

The objectives were to:

1. identify, analyse and learn from existing experiences within programmes that envisage development of local potential and poverty reduction (human and income);
2. systematise innovative and creative elements of the studied training practice; and
3. propose possible ways of bridging the VET sphere (the role and place of VET system in local development).

1.3.2. Methodology

The study built on data gathered through field research in the three Central Asian countries, conducted by national expert teams with the support of a European expert in each case. There was a sample of about 12-35 programmes in each country. The stocktaking was based on interviews and field visits within a country-wide approach. Similar questionnaires and reporting structures were used for each country to facilitate comparison.

1.3.3. What is local development?

Local development is a wide concept that represents a process through which a certain number of institutions and / or local people mobilise themselves in a given territory in order to create, strengthen and stabilise activities using as best as possible the resources of the territory to: improve incomes, employment opportunities and quality of life.

The study notes that local approaches to development offer certain strengths. Local development attempts to integrate multiple development measures taken to combat poverty. Local development initiatives are often grassroots, bottom-up, movements and, as such, local participation, problem identification and design of solutions make it an effective approach. Partnership and involvement of different public and social actors are crucial.

1.3.4. Training and skills for local development

The research notes that skills development for local development is a task for more than the education system alone. It is a national task that involves all the educational potential of the country: the training potential of formal and non-formal education; social and community organisations; development institutions, urban and rural small businesses (including informal sector workshops and farms); the capacity of municipalities.

1.3.5. Study findings

1.3.5.1. A typology for projects

The study found a great diversity of projects from various sectors and of various size. Areas of skills and knowledge were identified: social development; association; management; production; legislation; rights and advocacy.

The research proposed a typology of projects or components from the three country studies:

1. Local development through community development mobilisation.
2. Development of farming.
3. Specific training projects: VET development; business training; and legislative literacy.
4. National projects: training and retraining of unemployed.
5. Private enterprise development: specific skills for productivity.

1.3.5.2. Training strategies in the framework of local development

The research noted that strategies in community and local development projects are neither always clearly defined. However, every project pursues certain objectives. The identified training strategies comprise the elements below:

- availability of a goal/objective;
- target audience – e.g., unemployed youth, farmers;
- target region;
- organisation of training services;
- weight of training components in project activities; and
- partnerships.

1.3.5.3. Identified strengths

Those NGOs and other organisations in the study that are devoted to local development have created training know-how of an integrated character – training is integrated within a specific framework of other activities.

Strengths of reviewed projects include:

- innovative methods (participative, non authoritarian);
- new subject areas for new audiences (e.g., adult education, private enterprise skills);
- complex skills: problem analysis and solving, autonomous decision making, group work, learning to learn;
- integration of instrumental and limited occupational training;
- match with customers' needs and backgrounds (local know-how);
- trained trainers;
- products of training organisation;
- flexibility of organisation, access, delivery;
- recourse to specific expertise; and
- pro-activity and ability to interact with clients/donors.

1.3.5.4. Identified weaknesses

In general terms the studied projects share certain common weaknesses, most of which are summarised below:

- The weak partnership with local government / institutions limits the extent and visibility of activities. Partnership in local development projects usually mainly involves the civil society organisations, the donors and the community.
- Financial sustainability is a problem when; a) programmes are expensive relative to the purchasing power of the population, and b) there is very little state funding for informal sector training and hence most is externally funded.
- Many projects are evaluated against short-term results, often only on the trainees' satisfaction evaluation. Real measurement of effects is rare (ie. to track changes among those trained, whether changes are traceable to the intervention, and what other training and support services would be useful). Furthermore, training components tend to be either auxiliary tools to management or rather limited in budgets.
- The limited size of local NGOs tends to be a constraint on the acknowledgement by the public sector and a constraint on the extent of the projects.

- Targeting and working with the poor are problematic. NGOs are often taken as representative of the poor.
- Skills projects are often targeted at donor funding and not at stakeholders.
- Fragmentation and multiplication of training suppliers and packages result in little continuity and little overall coherence. For example, short-term projects are not helpful in the skills development process.
- Insufficiently clear training quality supports (criteria, tools, knowledge management, exchange fora, boards).

1.3.6. Conclusions

1.3.6.1. Education and training don't work like magic

Education does not work like magic. It is a most necessary but not sufficient element for change. Changes in individual lives and community dynamics are not a function of education and training efforts alone.

1.3.6.2. Skills development against poverty

Without access to learning, skills and knowledge the most vulnerable populations will only very slowly benefit from the poverty / inequality reduction potential of economic growth. Without skills and knowledge, poor populations have little say, cannot choose, cannot insert themselves in the rapidly changing society and economy. They will become increasingly excluded because skills and knowledge are the key asset in the new economy.

Skills development components of the studied projects have addressed or endeavoured to address, at least partially and with different strategic results, some of the key features of poverty in the Central Asian context. Skills training allows learning how to learn, and is more than only the transfer of specific dexterities for defined occupations. It allows learning how to understand the environment, including cause and effect relationships and identifying opportunities. It involves learning to choose and learning to take initiatives, as well as learning to associate and work together. Skills training also boosts self-confidence and allows learners to confront changes in the world of work and rapid technology shifts.

SECTION TWO: CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT WITHIN AGENCIES IN THE FIELD OF SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

2.1. THE CHALLENGE OF STAFF DEVELOPMENT FOR SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Simon McGrath

2.1.1. Introduction

There is a growing concern of a number of agencies about the state of their capacity in the field of skills development. Some of this arises from general agency concerns about capacity, such as how to operate in the context of new partnership practices or how to respond to an ageing workforce. However, skills development brings a particular set of specific challenges for agencies.

Skills development is a broader and more complex notion than the older concept of technical and vocational education and training. It is particularly challenging as it looks both to the poverty agenda of the Millennium Development Goals but also to visions of a globalised knowledge economy. It is an interdisciplinary field that spans concerns at the micro, meso and macro levels and needs to be seen neither theoretically nor practically as simply a sub-field of education.

2.1.2. The staffing challenges facing agencies

Many agencies are concerned that they do not have the staff or the skills suitable to a range of growing challenges. Three sets of challenges are seen as particularly serious. First, they are worried that staff development has not kept pace with rapid and far-reaching changes in the nature of the work they do, particularly given the shift in focus from TVET to skills development. Second, agencies need to address a series of problems with the composition of their staff – especially in terms of age and gender. Third, many of them realise that they have yet to turn their commitments to partnership into sufficiently good practices.

2.1.2.1. The changing nature of agencies' work in skills development

This discussion paper series has already said much about the changing nature of skills development work that agency staff find themselves involved in. It has also discussed how these changing practices are shaped by broader changes in the way that development cooperation and development models are understood and delivered.

The work of agency staff in skills development has become far more complex in the past decade. Previously, staff were often experienced technical trainers, concerned with how to manage training institutions. Now, they are expected to be knowledgeable about the construction of national policies and programmes for skills development. They must be able

to discuss such issues with national counterparts and with other agencies. They also need increasingly to locate their knowledge about skills development in the context of multi-sectoral programmes and multi-disciplinary teams. They need to understand how their work fits with sectoral programmes or even budgetary support; and how their contribution addresses the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and the ultimate goal of poverty reduction. They need to operate in a climate in which far more authority and responsibility is devolved to country or regional programmes. In all of their actions they need to think of how they can respond to increasingly insistent questions about how they can prove the impact of their increasingly diffuse work. Moreover, they must do this in a climate in which many agency staff or politicians do not see skills development as a particularly important element of development strategy.

Indeed, those managing skills development activities within agencies are increasingly aware that they may no longer have specialists working in the field. Thus, there is a further challenge of ensuring that those engaged from the agency side in national dialogues on educational or economic policies have some knowledge of skills development debates and the importance of including them in broader sectoral and multi-sectoral strategies.

2.1.2.2. The demographic challenge

A number of agencies have ageing workforces or are already losing large numbers of senior staff to retirements. This is true across the range of their activities. However, it may be particularly serious in the area of skills development. This is because there has not been the same recruitment and replacement of staff in this field as in some others.

Agencies faced with such an age profile need to try to “capture” as much of the knowledge of these departing staff as possible. Those that intend to retain a focus on skills development need to engage in far more active recruitment policies (see below). This will then lead on to a far more active process of initial training.

Old-style vocational education and training in agencies was highly male-dominated. Still today, many agencies are highly unbalanced in the gender make-up of their skills development teams. This is no longer acceptable and a number of agencies have highlighted the need to redress this imbalance in their future recruitment.

Age and gender are visible concerns of agencies regarding their demographic patterns. However, they are noticeably silent on other issues such as the recruitment of disabled staff or, in the case of bilaterals, of ethnic minorities from their own countries.

2.1.2.3. The need for an improved relationship with partners

In spite of many statements in recent years about the need for improved levels of partnership and national ownership of development, it is apparent that agency practices still have to make further improvements. Agencies cannot think only of their internal needs when considering staff development. They have to go further to ask what improved capacities their partners expect and require of them, and how they can promote mutual learning and strengthening of capacity.

Agencies often talk about the importance of dialogue with partners. This is often reciprocated. However, there are grounds for concern about the ability of many agency staff to be good dialogue partners, whether through inexperience, lack of key competencies or because of their attitudes. Agencies' staff development strategies must also reflect on the importance of national staff and of both national and international consultants.

2.1.3. Agencies' staff development needs for skills development

Not all agencies have the same staff development needs when it comes to skills development. For some bilateral agencies, skills development is unlikely to regain its previous importance in at least the medium term. Such agencies may well be more interested in "piggybacking" on the experience of other agencies in debates on skill. However, for others and for specialised agencies such as the ILO, the need for a continuing expertise in skills development is apparent.

It is important also to remember that this expertise can be expressed in two ways. On the one hand, there will be a need for skills development specialists. On the other, there will be a need for building the skills development knowledge of generalists or staff with other specialisms.

2.1.3.1. New staff

The demographic pattern sketched out above illustrates the pressing need in some agencies to recruit new staff to work on skills development.

2.1.3.1.1. Younger staff

Some agencies are concerned to recruit and develop significant numbers of new staff in the area of skills development. They are concerned about the supply of such potential new staff. Increasingly, this may lead to a strengthening of relationships with certain universities in order to better identify possible candidates for employment. It may even lead to new partnerships with these providers, offering internships for students or offering limited teaching on programmes. Such interventions would be designed to better orient students to the needs of agencies.

However, it is important to note that the pool of potential new staff has changed over time. Potential recruits are less likely to have spent time in practical work (e.g., as instructors) in the field and are more likely to have a doctorate. This means that more focus needs to be placed on marketing skills development as an attractive career for such graduates.

Even where good recruits are identified and employed, there is likely to be much induction work still to be done. Few university graduates, from whatever level of qualification, will have sufficient experience in the field, in policy analysis or in many of the specific competences needed of agency staff. They will almost certainly lack the experience and maturity necessary for them to be participants in policy dialogues with senior government officials in partner countries.

All this means that there is much training to be done of new recruits. Even where they have a very specific background in skills development research, they will need to have their specialist skills deepened. They will also need agency-specific skills on procedures and policies; improved knowledge about aid practices such as sector programmes and budgetary support; language and cross-cultural communication skills; and will need to develop knowledge on particular partner countries.

This implies at least a medium-term view of their career path. It suggests a careful management of their rotation through various posts. It may mean shorter or longer term secondments to other agencies and to other types of institutions.

In addition to developing specialists, those in charge of skills development in agencies will also need to pay greater attention to the challenge of building skills and knowledge about skills development for non-specialist staff. This is most likely to take the form of short introductory courses to orient staff to skills issues, but may also include more advanced courses as necessary. A number of agencies are exploring collaboration in the delivery of such activities.

2.1.3.1.2. More experienced staff

Many agencies do not simply recruit entry-level staff but also appoint experienced professionals. Where these professionals come from outside the development cooperation field, many of the same induction requirements hold. Even those recruited from other agencies will still require a basic induction to the particular working procedures and practices of the specific agency.

2.1.3.2. Existing staff

For existing agency staff, too, there are evident development needs that arise from the changing and ever more complex nature of the work that they are engaged in. Whilst much of this skills development may come from informal learning, there may also be a place for more formal interventions.

2.1.3.3. National staff

In many agencies, staff recruited from and working in the particular partner country play an increasingly important role. In GTZ, for instance, such staff outnumber German staff by more than three-to-one. Too often, such staff remain rather marginal to processes such as agency policy development, staff development and knowledge sharing.

In stressing the staff development needs of such staff it is important to remember that they often possess crucial skills and knowledge relevant to the programme country that is lacked by the agencies' own nationals (in the case of bilaterals). Thus, such staff need to be seen not only as potential recipients of capacity development but also as important contributors to the overall staff development activities of the agencies for which they work.

Moreover, such staff need to be seen as more integral to the work of their agencies. They are not merely the assistants of the staff from the agency's home country. Issues of career paths and of levels of professional autonomy in conducting work need to be addressed alongside specific staff development issues.

2.1.3.4. Consultants

Consultants are also doing an increasing proportion of agency work. These may come from the programme country, from the region or be globally recruited. Their large presence in agency work highlights the need to think more carefully about how they perform their work and how this can be enhanced.

Ideally, a consultant in this field would have country-specific knowledge, knowledge about skills development debates and about broader aid debates. To this would then be added some basic understanding of the needs and procedures of the specific agency. However, this combination of knowledge and skills is rare.

Increasing the capacity of the different types of consultants is likely to require different emphases. Globally-recruited consultants (typically from OECD countries) face particular needs in being able to provide context-sensitive advice. This is true of both short-term and long-term consultants. Those coming from the same region as the programme country may be assumed to be better sensitised to local conditions but this cannot be assumed. Indeed, in some cases, regional rivalries may undermine either the consultant's ability to be culturally sensitive or negatively shape the partners' perceptions of what the consultant says. For instance, the impact of South African consultants working in Southern Africa cannot be understood outside the concerns that many Southern Africans have about the regional domination of South Africa in political and economic terms. For consultants based in programme countries, a particular challenge may come in trying to understand the very particular language and concerns of agencies.

However, the role of consultancy also raises larger questions than those of how to develop their capacity. In using consultants, agencies also have some responsibility to consider how the growing importance of consultancy impacts on capacity development within partner governments and civil societies.

2.1.3.5. Retention strategies

Recruiting staff and training them are crucial to the improved capacity of agencies to deliver. So is an improved practice of using consultants. However, agencies must also pay attention to the retention of existing staff. Salaries and benefits are clearly important here, but so are broader measures that maintain and promote staff commitment and morale. Importantly, these are likely to include opportunities for further learning and professional development, whether through formal programmes or through informal learning.

2.1.4. Existing and possible strategies

Some of the responses discussed in the working group meeting reflect on practices that are emergent or, occasionally, well-established within agencies. However, it was evident that there was a concern to give far more attention to this area.

2.1.4.1. Training

Some of the discussion thus far highlights the potential role of formal training in addressing the staff development challenges of agencies. Training programmes may be offered to the different types of recipients outlined above. Only a very few training opportunities already exist within agencies and in specialist centres such as the ILO International Training Centre, InWent and the International Institute for Educational Planning of UNESCO.

In addressing future training needs, thought needs to be given to the possibilities of agency cooperation in training provision, whether at headquarters or field level. The appropriate balance of contact and distance delivery modes and the optimal blend of backgrounds of those delivering courses also need to be considered.

2.1.4.2. Mentorship

Particularly for junior staff, greater attention needs to be paid to mentoring programmes. Good mentoring requires skilled, experienced and enthusiastic mentors. There are many such people within agencies. However, the workloads of many agency staff are likely to deter many potential mentors, or undermine the effectiveness of their mentoring role should they agree to participate.

2.1.4.3. Career pathing and rotation

Staff development cannot focus simply on rapidly orientating new staff. Agencies need to have a better strategic vision of the likely career path of new staff and how that path can be mapped out for the mutual benefit of both the individual and the organisation.

The rotation of staff at all levels through different posts is important to their development. In particular, it is important to think about the right balance of field and headquarters experience and the optimal duration of each posting. Postings need to be long enough to build up experience, knowledge and relationships. However, too long a posting, particularly in the field, can lead to the building up of personal “empires” by individuals.

2.1.4.4. Exchange programmes

Some agencies already have exchange programmes with other agencies. Sometimes these are between two bilateral or multilateral agencies (e.g., CIDA to JICA or the World Bank to ETF) or they can be between these two categories (e.g., DFID to the European Commission). Often

these are for staff in mid-career and may be for one to three years. However, there may also be merits in developing shorter exchange visits for younger staff to more than one other agency as part of their early professional development.

2.1.4.5. HR policies: towards agencies as high performance workplaces

The particular staff development needs for skills development often resonate with broader human resources (HR) practices in agencies. It is important to note that agencies are increasingly taking their HR needs more seriously and that some of the debates of this paper are reflecting in existing or emerging practices of certain agencies. Nonetheless, agencies as a whole may need to pay more attention to the ways in which their HR practices and overall cultures contribute to them being “high performance workplaces”. In this regard, DFID’s participation in the Investors in People programme of workforce development is a sign of one agency’s commitment to being a high quality employer. This approach of gaining external recognition for its workforce practices may be one that other agencies should consider.

2.1.4.6. Knowledge sharing

Agencies are also increasingly concerned with building their own capacity through more structure knowledge activities.

2.1.4.6.1. The role of brokerage functions

Agencies’ staff development activities could be enhanced through better awareness of what other agencies and other organisations are doing. There is a need to examine what role certain intermediary organisations could play in ensuring that knowledge sharing on matters such as training or employment opportunities is better shared across agencies. The Working Group and UNESCO’s UNEVOC Centre are two examples of structures that have sought to provide elements of such knowledge sharing. However, there is a case for thinking more strategically about the brokerage function in staff development for skills development.

2.1.4.6.2. The role of databases and information sites

Many agencies have been seduced by the imagined power of databases, and information portals. Clearly such tools can play a role in the staff development process. However, there is a need for caution about the extent and value of that role. Nonetheless, it is clear that some sites, such as that of UNEVOC, are playing a useful role in knowledge sharing through the development of information sites.

2.1.4.6.3. The role of communities of practice

Many agencies have also begun in the past five years to use communities of practice as a way of sharing professional and technical knowledge internally, and, occasionally, externally. Such communities are intended as a means of better codifying the existing, tacit knowledge of agency staff and of providing useful knowledge to other staff that can lead to improved practice. There are important benefits in such activities. However, several agencies have failed to maximise the benefits of such structures. Sometimes they have made them too formal and bureaucratised, but more often they have failed to give them sufficient support. What is evident is that such structures will rarely succeed without the animation of an enthusiastic and skilled facilitator. However, as with mentoring, it is rare that agencies reflect the importance of this task in the workplan of the staff members involved.

2.1.5. Conclusion

There are good reasons for agencies to increase their focus on the staff development aspect of their skills development work. Internal and external changes have made skills development more complex, whilst demography is increasingly forcing agencies to take recruitment more seriously.

In looking at skills development, agencies as a whole will need to address both the need for new specialists and the importance of some basic orientation towards skills issues for other staff. However, the importance of both strands will clearly vary considerably across agencies.

There are a wide range of existing and emerging practices that agencies can draw upon in addressing the staff development challenge and there are good signs of a growing commitment to shared solutions. However, as Weyer's synthesis of existing practices (available on the WGICSD site) shows, there is very little specialist training on skills development currently available.

However, it is important that the focus on agencies' internal needs should not blind them to their greater responsibility to address the needs of their partners in developing and transition countries. Agency staff development must take account of what these partners say about the nature of development cooperation and how they would like it to improve. Agencies must also pay particular attention to how their staff development strategies for national staff in programme countries and their use of consultants impact upon the capacity development of their partners. If agencies can take these issues into account in their staff development activities then the overall impact of this work is likely to be far greater.

APPENDIX ONE: THE PROGRAMME

Thursday 8th July

Venue: ETF, Viale Settimio Severo, 65 - SALA A

**From the informal economy to local development: contribution of skills development.
Lessons learned and new challenges**

Chair: *Kenneth King*, NORRAG

09:00- 09:10	Opening of the meeting <i>Muriel Dunbar</i> , Director, ETF <i>Frans Lenglet</i> , Director of Training, ITC-ILO
09:10 – 09:20	Presentation of new ILO recommendation on HRD, education, training and lifelong learning <i>Trevor Riordan</i> , ILO
09:20 – 09 :30	Presentation of participants
09:30 – 09:45	Presentation of the ETF <i>Muriel Dunbar</i> , Director, ETF
09:45 – 10:00	Introduction to the theme <i>Kenneth King</i> , NORRAG
10:00 – 11:00	Skills for the Knowledge Economy in the Middle East and North Africa: special focus on training for the informal sector in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Tunisia <i>Elena Carrero</i> , ETF <i>Guillermo Luis Hakim</i> , World Bank <i>Ghada Amin</i> , Phoenix Consulting
11:00 – 11:30	Coffee Break
11:30 – 12:30	Discussion
12:30 – 14:00	Lunch
14:00 – 14:40	Training strategies for local development in Central Asia <i>Eduarda Castel Branco</i> , ETF
14:40 – 15:30	Discussion
15:30 - 16:00	Coffee Break
16:00 – 17:00	General discussion, synthesis of the day and introduction to the second day

Kenneth King, NORRAG
Fred Fluitman, ITC-ILO

- 17:00 – 17:20 Presentation of:
"Agencies for International Cooperation in Technical and Vocational
Education and Training: A Guide to Sources of Information"
Hans Kronner, UNESCO-UNEVOC
- 17:20 – 18:00 Launch of the new World Bank book:
"Skills Development in Sub-Saharan Africa"
Arvil van Adams, World Bank

Friday 9th July

Venue: ITC-ILO Campus (Viale Maestri del Lavoro, 10), Pav. L. 1st floor

Agency capacities in skills development

- 09:00-09:15 Presentation of the ITC-ILO
Dario Arrigotti, ITC-ILO
- 09:15-09:30 Introduction to the theme
Michel Carton, NORRAG
- 09:30-10:30 Panel: Agencies' staff training needs for Skills Development policy
making
Malte Lipczinsky, SDC
Edda Grundwald, GTZ
Hélène Bourgade, EuropeAid
Frans Lenglet, ITC-ILO
- 10:30-11:00 Coffee Break
- 11:00-12:00 Two Working Groups
- Agency needs based on partner countries' situation
 - Exploration of potential solutions and joint action of WG members
- 12:00-12:30 Discussion
- 12:30-13:30 Lunch
- 13:30-14:30 Agency staff training proposals and other staff development measures
- 14:30-15:00 Information on the next activities of the Working Group
- 15:00-15:30 Evaluation and closing of the meeting

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APPENDIX THREE: ABOUT THE WORKING GROUP

1. LAUNCHING THE WORKING GROUP

The Working Group was launched in April 1996 with the following goals:

- » to increase the impact of development assistance
- » to reduce duplication and fragmentation of effort
- » to provide a forum for the discussion and dissemination of new ideas and good practice.

The following themes were identified around which information sharing would be focused:

- » conceptual frameworks of skills development (SD) and technical and vocational education and training (TVET)
- » donor and national policies
- » experiences in programme support to SD
- » project design and implementation
- » specific examples of donor co-operation
- » approaches to evaluation

2. COOPERATION: OLD MYTH OR NEW CHALLENGE?

Cooperation among agencies involved in development assistance is a long standing and commonly agreed objective. However, its attainment has been compromised by a range of factors, not least the rapidly changing global context within which development and assistance are taking place. The notion of cooperation has, thus, to be revisited and a number of questions addressed:

- * what is the future of cooperation at a time when competition appears the dominant form of relations?
- * what does cooperation mean in a context of many "norths" and multiple "souths"?
- * what becomes of cooperation when agencies are decentralising operations and the emphasis is shifting towards the development of southern capacities?
- * what effect do attempts to impose intra-sectoral coherence across aid policies have for policies in sectors such as skills development?
- * what is the implication of the cross-sectoral nature of skills development for cooperation between agencies?
- * what lessons can be learnt from other fora dedicated to agency cooperation?

3. SKILLS DEVELOPMENT: A BRIDGE BETWEEN EDUCATION, TRAINING AND PRODUCTION?

The Group has chosen to use the notion of vocational and technical skills development rather than technical and vocational education and training.

This reflects a concern to take notice of the move away from a focus on the large, homogenising institutions of the state in favour of more varied modalities of skills development which prevail in many countries.

The concept places the emphasis on the exploration of skills development across a range of institutional locations, in education, training and production systems. The process of coming to terms with this is an on-going one, both in the « north » and in the « south. » As far as

agencies are concerned, it has led to a variety of responses. Some have chosen to merge their vocational training concerns with their small enterprise programmes whilst others have come to view skills development in both sectoral and instrumental ways.

4. INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION: BETWEEN STATES OR SOCIETIES?

The focus on skills development is part of a wider realisation that development cooperation is not simply an affair of states. A variety of other actors are increasingly involved, both « north » and « south ». Agency policies are increasingly coming to reflect the need to include new constituencies in policy dialogues. However, dialogue, coordination and cooperation within countries is by no means easy. The behaviour of agencies can serve to worsen rather than better the situation. Central to the concerns of the Group is the examination of strategies that donors can promote and utilise in order to strengthen the voices of stakeholders and the mechanisms by which they can be heard.

5. THE WORKING GROUP: TOWARDS PROFESSIONAL AND INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT?

This Group is intended to enhance the capacity of its members to improve the efficiency, effectiveness and impact of international assistance to skills development. In order for this to be achieved a stable presence of core staff from participating agencies. The personal commitment of these individuals will be as important as their representative roles.

In order to take account of decentralisation within agencies and the imperative for broader dialogues with wider constituencies, the Working Group will focus on the dissemination of information to relevant constituencies and individuals.

6. INTER-NETWORK COOPERATION

By viewing skills development broadly and acknowledging its intersections with other fields, the Group is highlighting an awareness with the need to develop relationships with other groupings. In particular, linkages will be explored with the Donors Committee for SME Development, the Association for the Development of African Education and the International Working Group on Education. The Group intends to explore mechanisms for information sharing across these different networks.

7. MECHANISMS FOR COOPERATION

The groups referred to above each have different modalities of organisation. They exist on a continuum between an informal club and a fully structured organisation. This Working Group is concerned to establish a mechanism for light but effective steering of its activities.

An important consideration when looking at the possible modality of the Group's operations is the potential financial base of its operations. At present a sum of money has been set aside by the SDC for coordination with hosts of each meeting taking responsibility for the costs of delivery of that meeting. It would also be desirable for the Group to be able to develop new funding mechanisms in order that coordinated activities might take place as has been the case with the other networks mentioned above.