

***UNESCO- BMBF
International Expert
Consultation Meeting
on TVET***

**Employability and Employment:
Capsular Notes on Trends, International
Technical Cooperation and UNESCO's Role**

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**Bonn, Germany
12-13 January 2009**

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For an experts' meeting, a food for further thoughts is all one would offer, and in a capsular form. Based on lessons learned from closely working with a number of developing countries, this contribution touches upon three main priority issues namely; 1) actual TVET trends in developing countries compared to what we call as global trends, 2) current and anticipated role of technical cooperation providers, and 3) towards a sustainable impact of UNESCO's support to member states in the area of TVET.

TVET Trends in Developing Countries

Talking about "Global Trends", in general, is always an attractive issue; at least because it enables the writer/speaker to quote what the most developed countries are doing, which is usually well documented, and to urge other countries to catch that high-speed developmental rocket, regardless to whether or not they would be able to do? Meanwhile, trends in developing countries that differ from those adopted by developed countries are categorized, in many cases rightly, as irrelevant. The question here is "to what extent it is feasible to "customize" for each country, or sometimes at a smaller or wider level, its own "tailor-made" trends and systems that would work (be applicable and fruitful)? For many developing countries talking about LLL, LLG, learning workplace, recognition of prior learning, NQF and the like would not be even heard till a national capacity is enough developed to absorb, comprehend, plan and implement modern TVET strategies and systems.

Practice shows that the trend in most developing countries, supported in most cases by technical cooperation providers, is to expand TVET offering and encourage entrepreneurial training. While both approaches look very much needed, segmented or premature implementation results in bringing along some failure elements. Applying these trends in developing countries usually face lack of some basic prerequisites, and unfriendly culture. Assessing actual labour market needs, assuring quality and meeting students aspirations and interest as well as actively involving

concerned partners and ensuring workplace tasting/experience for trainees are just to name a few of the missed prerequisites. Long backlog of governmental dominance is not yet bridged to real partnership, and governmental actions are seen by the public with much suspicion. For entrepreneurial training, no consideration is given to the personal traits of the individual to predict his/her chances to succeed as independent entrepreneur, absence of the entrepreneurial spirit in generations that used to see all family members as governmental civil servants, lack of good practices/ successful models in the society and entrepreneurial trainers who never practiced a private initiative and lived all their life as salaried staff are again just few imbedded factors that lead to failure. Developing countries trends need to be practically customized to prevailing culture, labour markets and economy. Not necessarily imported from developed countries.

Technical Cooperation and National Strategic Capacity

Something seem to be going wrong, with international organizations and donors offering years and decades of technical, and more, assistance but still TVET in most developing countries is hit from outside with growing unemployment rates and from inside with its own irrelevance. Unfortunately, in most cases, national capacity is not capable of customizing TVET policies/ strategies and trends to national/local realities; while technical assistance seems to prefer more visible forms such as curriculum development, training of trainers and establishing/equipping training institutions

In spite of taking into account the cases where national and local authorities and other stakeholders may monopolize external funding to their own profit, building the national capacity to be able to exercise what in present is done by international experts seems to be the only viable way to ensure ownership and sustainability. Effort already aiming at building that capacity could not be denied, but in most cases the strategic level, where policies/strategies are to be formulated, is overlooked. Thus, much of the effort is missing coherence and integration. Also, there is a clear absence of necessary research, mainly the field research, to deeply analyze the specific national and local labour markets and link that to TVET. Without strategic thinking based on sound research and reliable updated information, TVET policies and practices in many countries are dictated by uneducated views and vision. In many developing countries a certain percentage of students are unwillingly "channeled" into dead-end TVET programmes that lead to no where in the labour market. Concepts such as individual interest and aptitude are not on the agenda and no

career guidance is provided. Needs of the labour market are sketchy and TVET relevance, qualitative - quantitative - geographic or sectoral, are not properly considered. International technical cooperation providers need to avoid seeing the officials' agreement as sole criteria for judging appropriate interventions; in many cases such agreement just reflects an anticipated benefit to those officials.

In today's complexity of labour markets, and educational systems alike, and employers need for "ready-to-produce" workers; employability of individuals became the major target of TVET programmes and providers. Attaining such target for today's fast changing labour markets necessitate broader foundation of science and other general education subject matters as well as very specialized competencies in specific occupations. It also stresses the need for social, behavioral and attitudinal skills. Moreover, it could not be achieved without continuous consideration given to updating TVET programmes. Consequently, it would not be realized without all stakeholders, with employers at the fore front, actively and willingly participating. Transparent, reliable and continuously updated and analyzed information on the current and projected labour markets is equally important to enhance individuals' employability. Segmented technical cooperation interventions addressing some but not all factors of success including involvement of all concerned actors, would normally have little, if any, impact on TVET in any country.

UNESCO's Role

For more than half a century UNESCO is offering a wide range of support to member states. TVET importance was not overlooked by the Organization, supported by the German Government initiated UNEVOC Centre that in turn established several modalities to open the scope of building national capacity; with the electronic Forum as a very successful modality available daily for discussion and open for world-wide contributions. Several UNESCO institutions are also contributing in areas like educational planning, statistics, etc. National UNESCO Committees and National Correspondences in the UNESCO Secretariat are also encouraged to identify country needs and get appropriate support. Yet, this important role could be enhanced to optimize its impact on TVET.

As employability and employment are increasingly becoming the essence of TVET, current articulation between UNESCO and the ILO need to be re-visited with synchronization in mind. Lines drawn by education and training are no longer visible and productive employment became a joint objective for all. Many separate initiatives by each of the two organizations are successful, but articulation would increase their impact.

Career guidance, work-based training, demand driven programmes, appropriate employability and higher productivity by workers who enjoy their work top the list of what could be jointly done by deeper UNESCO/ILO, and beyond, collaboration. Due consideration to linking and complementing activities and to formulate integrated country programmes could be fruitful.

Conclusions

- 1- Would member states, in full partnership with all concerned stakeholders, formulate appropriate TVET policies and strategies to guide the multi-stakeholders efforts, including technical assistance providers, and optimize graduates employability?
- 2- Would technical cooperation providers coordinate efforts and ensure availability of an educated vision of where TVET would be heading to ensure adequate response to actual labour market needs, in present and the foreseen future?
- 3- Would the UNESCO and the ILO, along with other interested international bodies and the donor community, assist member states in formulating practical and integrated TVET strategies/policies to ensure higher labour productivity that enable national economies being competitive?
