

UNESCO strategy on Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)

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TVET prepares learners for specific jobs or types of work, often including practical and/or procedural activities. The aim of TVET is to enable learners to meet needs of employers for qualified labour and/or own needs related to production of goods and services. “Skills training” in general denotes development of qualifications in the same line, but with a more limited scope and volume of training, often focussing on performance of one task (e.g. operation of a specific machine) or a limited set of tasks (e.g. different types of welding).

International trends in TVET and TVET needs

TVET is an important element in any national education system. Production in most areas is increasingly dependent on specialised labour as products and production processes are developed and mechanised. In general, access to qualified labour is a necessary, although not sufficient, condition for the efficient utilisation of national resources, and for economic competitiveness. Successful economies in general have access to a broad variety of qualified labour – and corresponding education and training opportunities - at different levels, including technical and vocational knowledge and skills. Innovations and new products often result from combinations of academic knowledge and technical/vocational skills. For the individual, even basic vocational skills imply opportunities for income-generation and for meeting own needs by the processing of local resources. In the local context, individuals with vocational skills can deliver requested products and services and create new employment opportunities.

Many poor countries, although often rich in natural resources, and their populations suffer from lack of necessary knowledge and skills to utilise/extract and process local natural resources under own ownership and inside their own country. Unprocessed minerals and other resources are exported for processing abroad, thereby leaving significant profits and local positive effects to foreign companies and people. Lack of available qualified labour is a major obstacle to foreign direct investments (FDI) in and one reason for close-down and relocation of existing companies from low-cost countries.

TVET and skills training opportunities are found in every country. But many poor countries face significant challenges relating to the relevance and quality of existing provisions. Qualifications of candidates do not meet the requirements of employers. Quality is often low due to lack of qualified teachers and lack of / old training equipment. Public TVET institutions do not have the necessary resources for maintenance, updating and modernisation. This, in turn, has given room for a variety of private, more or less serious actors that establish training courses in different areas, claimed to be requested “by the market”. National systems for quality assurance are absent in most of these countries.

It is an interesting and striking fact that many rich countries that give high priority to TVET – for economic and competitiveness reasons - in their national education systems, at the same time give little attention to TVET in international development cooperation. If the main purpose of international development cooperation is to assist poor countries to develop and become economically independent, it is difficult to find good arguments for this policy difference.

In most poor countries (and in many rich), the general esteem of TVET is low. Parents and learners consider TVET much less attractive than general, academic education. The governments often give little attention and resources to TVET institutions and consider them arrangements for those who fail to pursue an academic career. High attendance costs, low quality and mismatch between training content and labour market needs contribute to the poor reputation.

After nearly two decades of neglect from most donor countries and international agencies, at a point where UPI targets are being met in many poor countries, TVET is again being discussed as one element to be included in a future development of post-primary education.

Content and organisation characteristics of systems to be promoted by a UNESCO strategy for TVET

MOER Norway would like to suggest that UNESCO emphasises the following aspects in its TVET strategy:

- The individual countries should have a comprehensive national TVET policy, aligned with other parts of the national education system (general education, lower and higher levels).
- Preferably, TVET should be an integrated part of a more comprehensive post-primary education sub-system.
- Education and training in all areas / sectors, including the agricultural sector, should be gathered and made the responsibility of one single ministry (or agency under one ministry).
- There should be common national standards related to the various types and levels of training, as well as national certification arrangements and national quality assurance based on systematic monitoring and assessment. Necessary capacity development in the education administration at national and other levels must be included as a central part of TVET policy development, in order to ensure the safe operation and good governance of the system. This is particularly important in decentralised systems with a large number of public and/or private training providers.
- TVET policy should be shaped in the interface between socio-cultural and economic policies, as a means to generate new production and employment opportunities.
- Public-private partnership arrangements should constitute the backbone of national TVET systems: TVET policy and content should be developed and delivered in close collaboration with the labour market actors and major private providers of skills training (NGOs etc.) in order to ensure relevance. Direct involvement in delivery through short work placements and apprenticeship arrangements will imply access for the learners (and teachers!) to relevant (modern) equipment and qualified instructors. Active involvement to ensure relevance and quality of training will be a good argument for and strengthen motivation of the labour market actors for contributing to the financing of the TVET system.

- Due to its high costs, the development of TVET should be done gradually: Whereas the policy framework and basic arrangements should be in place at an earliest possible stage, the development of provision capacity in the early phase should be adapted to apparent labour market needs and available resources (financing, qualified teachers). It should also be balanced with the development of other parts of the education sector, such as secondary general and higher education.
- With reference to the large informal sector in many poor countries, the TVET policy in these countries should comprise adequately adapted (minimum) training arrangements that target the vulnerable groups that operate here. Such special arrangements must be based on careful analyses of needs but should have clear links to the comprehensive national system, e.g. by constituting small modules of broader national curricula. This will give learners the possibility to gradually build a complete vocational qualification by adding new modules if and when conditions allow.
- National TVET curricula should include basic Entrepreneurship Education in support of self-employment for candidates in areas with limited employment opportunities.
- Any national TVET policy reform must include a policy and arrangements for recruitment, training, certification and retaining of TVET teachers.
- Once a system is in operation that provides relevant TVET of good quality, and parents and learners can see that candidates find wage employment or are able to create an income by self-employment in a weak economy, it is reason to believe that the esteem of TVET will improve. Nevertheless, marketing measures to improve the image and attract others than the weakest learners should be considered part of any TVET policy reform.
- With reference to the continuous development of markets and technologies, and hence changing labour market needs for vocational qualifications, one should emphasise flexibility in TVET policies and systems: TVET learners should have the opportunity to switch between different types of education and training, and the training should establish a knowledge foundation for learners that wish to pursue higher education or other types of further education (LLL). To this end, one should consider including some general academic subjects in the TVET curricula.
- TVET should, as every other part of education, have an important place in the general nation-building and hence should include necessary elements to ensure that the students develop necessary knowledge, skills and positive attitudes to human rights, democracy and protection of the environment.

UNESCO's possible role in TVET. General

As the UN agency responsible for Education in general, and as the lead agency in EFA, UNESCO naturally should have a strategy for TVET as well as for other education areas. However, also other UN / International agencies are involved in and have important experiences and competencies in TVET, including ILO, WB, UNIDO and UNDP. In line with the general policy of the Norwegian government, MOER will argue that UNESCO should take stock of all the available resources. The new UNESCO strategy should include a plan for cooperation between the agencies and coordination of these resources at global, regional and country levels, with UNESCO as the lead agency.

UNESCO is more than the HQ. Relevant TVET competencies are available in several UNESCO institutes, including UNEVOC, the IIEP and UIL. Staff with TVET qualifications is also found at the regional and cluster offices. UIS possess human resources with valuable competencies and experience in data collection, sampling and analyses. The new TVET strategy should include a plan for the division of roles between the various institutes and

offices, how capacity will be developed and how resources will be organised and coordinated between the various units.

UNESCO's possible role at global and regional levels

MOER Norway is of the opinion that UNESCO should take the lead role in generation, collection and dissemination of relevant information / data / knowledge on TVET. Education research is particularly weak in the area of TVET / skills development. The availability of interesting statistics is scarce. In the new TVET strategy UNESCO should stand forward as the hub for knowledge brokerage. UNESCO should:

- Establish a web portal for information and tools covering the various aspects of TVET
- Generate new knowledge by stimulating and commissioning research, e.g. on the relation / coherence between training provisions and labour market needs, tracer studies of TVET candidates from different types of training etc.
- Collect and publish under the new web portal good examples of policies and policy development processes (including e.g. labour market analyses), capacity development programs for administrative staff (curricula and organisation), organisational and partnership arrangements and their development, modes of delivery, national arrangements for monitoring and assessment / quality assurance, teacher training arrangements etc.

Furthermore, MOER Norway is of the opinion that UNESCO should promote and facilitate regional cooperation – as well as bi- and trilateral institutional cooperation between national education ministries south-south, south-north and south-south-north.

With reference to the significant international migration, UNESCO should also consider whether and how the organisation could contribute to the development of harmonised standards for the various areas of TVET, at regional and eventually (potentially) at global level. Examples of national systems for recognition of technical and vocational skills should be collected and published under the new web portal.

UNESCO's possible role at country level

It is the opinion of MOER Norway that UNESCO should NOT involve in development or implementation of projects at country level.

The role of UNESCO at this level should be to provide upstream policy advice, focussing on development of TVET systems according to national needs and priorities.

UNESCO should also contribute to capacity development in relation to TVET for national decision-makers / ministry personnel

Resources required for the successful implementation of the UNESCO strategy on TVET

A strategy will be of limited value to both UNESCO and the beneficiaries unless necessary resources are made available for implementation. The suggested increase of the education budget for 2010-2011 will not suffice to cover foreseen expenses for the implementation of the new TVET strategy. To some degree, one could possibly reallocate some human and financial resources within the organisation for TVET purposes. But in general, the successful implementation of the new TVET strategy will have to rely on a budget increase or extra-budgetary funds.

Considering the limited resources, with reference to UNESCO's current priority of Africa in education, and with reference to the particularly great needs for productive skills in most African countries, MOER Norway is of the opinion that UNESCO should consider whether one should concentrate on this continent for piloting of the new TVET strategy.